

MAY 23, 2005

The American Conservative

TORTURE **ON THE** **FARM**

**Why Conservatives
Should Care About
Animal Cruelty**

Inside

What Education Crisis?

Social Security Shell Game

Making Families Public Property

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JAZZ, GOLF & TAKI

Your magazine is almost too wonderful for words! I have adored Taki from his days at *Esquire* and *National Review*. Mr. Buchanan has long been my favorite spokesman for right-thinking and behaving. Twenty years or so ago, I would write to his residence. He would always respond, in longhand! The responses were terse but treasured.

TAC comes closest of all publications to actually telling the truth about who's responsible for the ills that afflict our declining society. That requires a boatload of courage. Bravissimo!

Two of my passions are golf and classical music. I play jazz professionally, as a trombonist. I discovered, through Stan Kenton, circa '66, Wagner. He is the greatest composer since Mozart and Beethoven. I have a decent library here devoted to him. Your recent piece on Wagner was just terrific, as was the reference to him in Mr. Stove's review of the new book by Michael Steen.

Steve Sailer is another long-time fave. His piece on golf course architecture was brilliant, written, as are all of *TAC*'s entries, without fear. I could go on, but I'll just offer another thanks!

HARRY F. HAGAN
Atlanta, Ga.

TRADE & TRADE-OFFS

The article on the GE plant making refrigerators ("Lights Out at GE," May 9) was a breath of fresh air. You now have everything on the table to discuss, rationally, protection against foreign production.

While there is no question that well paying jobs for people who are not very educated will be saved by such protection, there is also no question the refrigerators will cost more. Unlike many, I am willing to concede the trade-off might be worthwhile.

What needs to be added to the discussion is the mechanism for determining

which industries merit protection and by how much, unless there is simply a blanket of tariffs covering all imports. I am skeptical that our government will not treat industrial tariffs any differently from any thing else it ponders: no facts and gobs of demagoguery.

What also needs to be discussed is the likely opposition from people 65 and older. This group is concerned only that people under 65 give them money and that anything not given to them costs as little as possible. They care not one whit for jobs or the general welfare other than the general welfare of Social Security checks.

GILBERT BERDINE
Southlake, Texas

CONSTITUTIONAL CORRUPTION

I would like to extend my gratitude to the founders and contributors of this magazine. It seems to be a true source of the political Right and not just another mill of propaganda for the established order. Your magazine has given me political hope (spiritual hope in the Lord) that there are many more like-minded people.

With what has been going on with the judicial branch in the last few years, I feel that the American political establishment has failed us. What we are left with are parties with two different names but a common aim: to subvert the U.S. Constitution for their own gain. I read your latest issue and saw an advertisement for the Constitution Party. I cannot help but think that our next choice should be outside that which is established to serve itself and that which will serve us. Many in the judicial branch were nominated by the Republicans. So it seems that toeing the party line for the sake of filling seats does not justify my throwing a vote away to a party that courts me and then dumps me after election day.

It was Alexis de Tocqueville who said if America stops being good, she will cease to be great. Our new oligarchy has helped us to move from any objective standards to a degenerate path without perceiving any threat from the Constitution.

I thank you again for your magazine, your insight, and your vigilance.

In Christ,
PROTOPRIEST DIONYSI
Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church
via e-mail

THE REAL RIGHT

I occasionally follow the *New York Times* op-ed forums and stumbled upon an old Norman Mailer article in your magazine while doing a search.

Not being an American (in fact, I am a Canadian mining engineer resident in Peru for the past 10 years), I find no fault with your logic. In fact, I applaud it.

As a third-generation mining engineer who insists on wearing a blue button-down oxford shirt and navy-blue dress pants, even to the beach, you could not possibly call me less than conservative, with very traditional values (like paying my bills on time, paying taxes, marrying once, and respecting the law). However, the neo-cons have nothing to do with conservatism, and I see something closer to Germany circa 1935.

I have not yet had the time to review your publication fully, but you seem to be on the right track, and I hope that you continue your fine work.

JIM SHEPHERD
Lima, Peru

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com, by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.



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SCAPEGOATING BOLTON

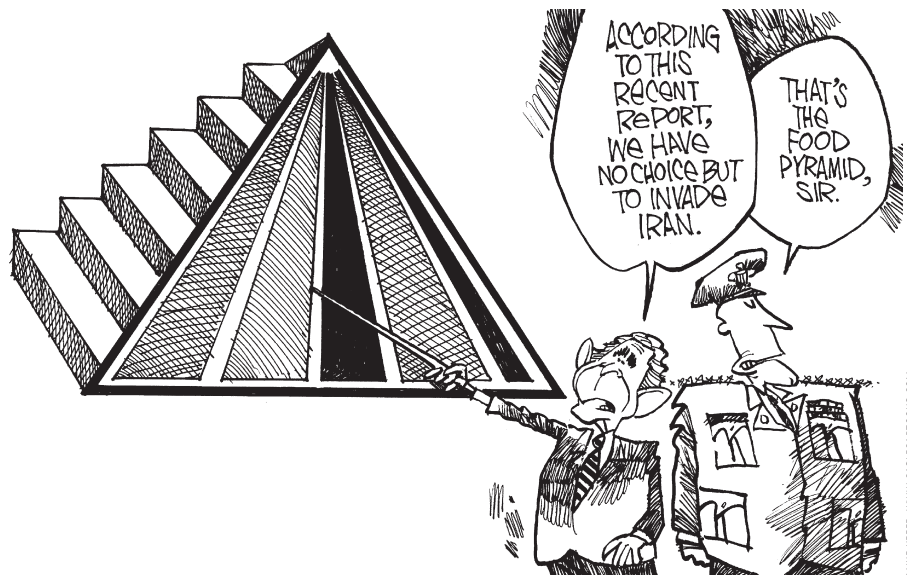
Some of the arguments made in defense of the embattled nomination of John Bolton make perfect sense. The president has a right to appoint people of his choice to the executive branch. The post in question is ambassador to the United Nations, not Miss Congeniality. And we're inclined to believe the myriad U.S. senators who say that most members of their body have been curt with colleagues or underlings at various points in their careers.

But it was clear—or should have been—that Bolton is not twisting in the wind before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee because of his gruff manner. Nor is he being held up by the breathless leaks that insinuate—without actually claiming—that there is something that might be construed as bullying or sexual harassment in his background.

In fact, Bolton has become a symbol of the Bush approach to international relations—not rudeness to subordinates but unilateralism, including the policy of preventive war, telling allies to stay in line and shut up, and manipulation of intelligence estimates. The hapless Bolton has become a poster child for the Iraq War and the overall Bush foreign policy.

Bolton did not have much to do with planning the Iraq War. That was a project for those higher up in the neocon pecking order. But Bolton is up for questioning and confirmation now, and suddenly not only Democrats but centrist Republicans like Hagel and Voinovich and liberal Republicans like Chafee—no doubt after extensive polling of their constituents—are recognizing that the Bush Doctrine is not very popular and not very effective at serving the national interest.

Of course, it would have been far better if the leading lights of the Senate



had asked tough questions in 2002, when the neocons were plotting the Iraq War. But better late than never.

[RELIGION]

A GOOD SHEPHERD

The election of a new pope, Benedict XVI, was met with much gnashing of teeth among liberal pundits and much cheering elsewhere. Press predictions that Cardinal Ratzinger would prove a divisive pontiff have been dispelled by even the earliest returns—a *Washington Post*-ABC News poll of American Catholics, hardly the most orthodox sheep in the flock, shows that eight in 10 support the new pope, while 73 percent say they are “enthusiastic.” There’s good reason for that.

Benedict is a reassuring figure, a man who as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith helped shape the pontificate of John Paul II. And the good he will do promises to extend well beyond the Catholic community. The hallmark of his career has been his refusal to subordinate faith to politics, a commitment evidenced both by his resistance to “liberation theology” within the church and by his remarks on the Iraq War: in 2002, he noted that the “concept of a preventive war does not appear in the catechism of the Catholic Church.” A year later, he affirmed, “There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq.”

The new pope, a scholar conversant in 10 languages, cannot be accused of *naïveté*. He experienced modern warfare at firsthand in 1945 as a conscript in—and soon deserter from—the German army and an inmate of an Allied POW camp. And his statements last year opposing Turkish entry into the European Union—“Europe,” he said, “is a cultural and not a geographic continent”—suggest that he understands the peril facing the West today. Benedict is a man of peace but not, in the face of a rising Islam and receding Christianity, a man of appeasement.

[BUDGET]

\$300,000,000,000

Asked back in March 2003 by the House Appropriations Committee what the reconstruction of Iraq would cost, Paul Wolfowitz testified, “There’s a lot of money for this that doesn’t have to be U.S. taxpayer money ... We’re dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction.” He wasn’t alone in his rosy prognosis. According to Donald Rumsfeld, “The Office of Management and Budget has come up with a number that’s something under \$50 billion. How much of that would be the U.S. burden and how much would be other countries’ is an open question.” (Recall that White House economic advisor Lawrence Lindsey was fired shortly after saying that the cost would be between \$100-\$200 billion.)

They couldn't have been more wrong—even the gloomy Mr. Lindsey. Last week Congress approved a spending bill that pushes combat and reconstruction costs—Afghanistan included but little more than a trifle—past \$300 billion. And Pentagon planners have said that they will need more funding for 2006.

"The sinews of war are infinite money," Cicero said. We've learned little in the centuries since.

[ECONOMICS]

CAFTA CONFLICT AHEAD

The Central American Free Trade Agreement is almost upon us, and with it comes the biggest trade battle Congress has seen in 15 years. Anywhere from 20 to 40 Republicans in the House are expected to join Democrats in fighting CAFTA, while in the Senate Nebraska Democrat Byron Dorgan has assembled an anti-CAFTA coalition with Republicans like Norm Coleman (Minn.), Lindsey Graham (S.C.), and Larry Craig (Idaho).

Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez touts CAFTA as a stepping-stone toward ever greater free-trade arrangements. Speaking to a group called—if you can believe it—the Emergency Committee for American Trade, Gutierrez asked, "What would it say about the prospects for global free trade if we didn't meet the challenge of our own hemisphere? How can we do anything but support our friends and neighbors in Central America?"

What we want to know is how the president and his cabinet can do anything but support their own friends and neighbors—their fellow citizens—by keeping jobs within this country.

[IMMIGRATION]

HASTA LA VISTA?

For a brief shining moment, it looked like the nation's most famous immigrant politician might be a closet immigration

restrictionist. "Close the borders in California and all across Mexico and in the United States," said California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. It is "unfair," he observed, to have so many illegal immigrants and "this lax kind of situation."

It didn't take long for the clarification to come: the Governor backtracked, saying that he meant to say "secure" the borders rather than close them. He blamed the misunderstanding on a "language problem." Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Luis Ernesto Derbez warned reporters in Mexico City, "We hope that he won't be tripped up by his English again..." Of course, Schwarzenegger should know too well that these kinds of "language problems" are another consequence of uncontrolled immigration. Secure the borders, indeed.

[JOBS]

WHAT'S BAD FOR GM

In 1955, GM's Charlie Wilson summed up his company's philosophy: "What's good for America is good for General Motors and vice versa." No longer.

Last week, on news that GM reported a loss of \$1.1 billion in the first quarter, President Bush commented, "They're going to have to learn to compete."

GM is the world's largest car company—not some naïf in need of Oval Office lectures. It knows something about building competitive cars, so much so that in the 1950s General Motors was able to employ more Americans at higher wages than any other company.

When the market went global, GM converted to Bush's own faith. On the promise of free-trade prosperity, it sent over 50 GM factories south to take advantage of \$2 per hour labor. Over \$8 billion has been invested in Mexican auto plants since NAFTA passed, and for what return? Neither GM nor America has profited. ■

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Bushism Imperiled

Six months after a re-election that strengthened his forces in both houses and left Democrats wondering whether they had irretrievably lost Middle America,

George W. Bush is mired in a Slough of Despond.

The salad days of the second Inaugural, the Iraqi election, and State of the Union are receding into memory, as his approval rating sinks to the lowest depths of his presidency. It is hard to see what turns it around. As Claudius lamented in Hamlet, “when troubles come they come not single spies but in battalions.”

At this writing, it is 50-50 the president can save John Bolton, his nominee to be UN ambassador, and the media wolf pack is in full howl in pursuit of Tom DeLay. Even if Bolton survives and DeLay eludes his media pursuers and ethics committee and Justice investigators, Bush is bleeding from both battles.

But it is on the great issues—war, the economy, the budget and trade deficits, and immigration—that his presidency could be imperiled.

After the Iraqi elections, the morale of that tormented people soared and the Sunni insurgency seemed to have lost the initiative. Enemy attacks diminished along with U.S. casualties. And with anti-Syrian demonstrators rallying in Beirut, and Cairo and Riyadh talking of elections, it seemed that the Bush Democracy Crusade was carrying the day in the Middle East. On the “Daily Show,” Jon Stewart wailed that his son would probably now be going to a high school named after George W. Bush.

But three months after the Iraqi elections, a new government was not in place. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas was being daily discredited as too

weak to halt Sharon’s seizures of West Bank land. Hamas had swept elections in Gaza. Hezbollah had called out half a million anti-American protesters in Beirut. In the largest rally ever held in a free Iraq, hundreds of thousands congregated in Baghdad to demand that U.S. troops go home.

Looking eastward in that arc of crisis, Iran has refused to shut down its nuclear program, Afghanistan is a narco-democracy, North Korea may be about to explode a nuclear device. “We will not allow the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons,” said Bush in his “axis-of-evil” address. But the Bush Doctrine is being daily defied by Kim Jong-Il.

With a \$400 billion deficit last year, President Bush proposed an austere budget. But every major cut he requested—in warships, the F/A-22 Raptor, farm subsidies, Medicaid—has been rejected. With U.S. taxes now consuming 16 percent of GDP and U.S. spending 20 percent, and the big ticket items—Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, defense and interest on the debt—all rising in cost, exploding deficits are America’s indefinite future.

Meanwhile, as oil and gas prices rise and the Dow suddenly sinks, pointing to a downturn, confidence in Bush’s management of the economy dissipates. The Jan.-Feb. trade numbers suggest this year’s trade deficit will exceed the \$617 billion record of 2004—by \$100 billion.

With Chinese textile imports rising, factories closing, and the dollar down against every major currency, Bush

intends to run through Congress his Central American Free Trade Agreement, CAFTA. House Democrats will almost unanimously oppose this clone of NAFTA and the White House has not yet lined up the Republicans to enact it. Understandably, for a vote for CAFTA could be a career-ender in 2006.

As the Democratic defections demonstrate, the momentum on trade has shifted away from the Davos Republicans who believe America is best served by having the necessities of her national life made more cheaply in Guangdong province to America Firsters who want to protect U.S. jobs.

But it is on the issue of illegal immigration that the White House seems to have put ideology and corporate interests ahead of homeland security and the political interests of the GOP.

Bush contemptuously dismissed as “irrational vigilantes” those Middle American Minutemen who volunteered to go to the border at Douglas, Arizona, to focus attention on the invasion. But, as April ends, the Minutemen are going home with universal praise for the peacefulness of their protest and the astonishing success they had, sitting in lawn chairs with binoculars and cell phones, in curbing the invasion of their country.

Last night on Fox News, this writer heard Bill O’Reilly and Congressman Tom Tancredo use the I-word, impeachment, should terrorists detonate a terror device they smuggled over the border President Bush refuses to defend.

The president’s problem is this: a conviction politician, he believes deeply in his ideology and policies. But the country is coming to believe neither is working for America. Either he makes a mid-course correction, or the country will make it for him in 2006. ■

[cruel & unusual]

Fear Factories

The case for compassionate conservatism—for animals

By Matthew Scully

A FEW YEARS AGO I began a book about cruelty to animals and about factory farming in particular, problems that had been in the back of my mind for a long while. At the time I viewed factory farming as one of the lesser problems facing humanity—a small wrong on the grand scale of good and evil but too casually overlooked and too glibly excused.

This view changed as I acquainted myself with the details and saw a few typical farms up close. By the time I finished the book, I had come to view the abuses of industrial farming as a serious moral problem, a truly rotten business for good reason passed over in polite conversation. Little wrongs, when left unattended, can grow and spread to become grave wrongs, and precisely this had happened on our factory farms.

The result of these ruminations was *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*. And though my tome never quite hit the bestseller lists, there ought to be some special literary prize for a work highly recommended in both the *Wall Street Journal* and *Vegetarian Teen*. When you enjoy the accolades of PETA and *Policy Review*, Deepak Chopra and Gordon Liddy, Peter Singer and Charles Colson, you can at least take comfort in the diversity of your readership.

The book also provided an occasion for fellow conservatives to get beyond

their dislike for particular animal-rights groups and to examine cruelty issues on the merits. Conservatives have a way of dismissing the subject, as if where animals are concerned nothing very serious could ever be at stake. And though it is not exactly true that liberals care more about these issues—you are no more likely to find reflections or exposés concerning cruelty in *The Nation* or *The New Republic* than in any journal of the Right—it is assumed that animal-protection causes are a project of the Left, and that the proper conservative position is to stand warily and firmly against them.

I had a hunch that the problem was largely one of presentation and that by applying their own principles to animal-welfare issues conservatives would find plenty of reasons to be appalled. More to the point, having acknowledged the problems of cruelty, we could then support reasonable remedies. Conservatives, after all, aren't shy about discoursing on moral standards or reluctant to translate the most basic of those standards into law. Setting aside the distracting rhetoric of animal rights, that's usually what these questions come down to: what moral standards should guide us in our treatment of animals, and when must those standards be applied in law?

Industrial livestock farming is among a whole range of animal-welfare concerns that extends from canned trophy-

hunting to whaling to product testing on animals to all sorts of more obscure enterprises like the exotic-animal trade and the factory farming of bears in China for bile believed to hold medicinal and aphrodisiac powers. Surveying the various uses to which animals are put, some might be defensible, others abusive and unwarranted, and it's the job of any conservative who attends to the subject to figure out which are which. We don't need novel theories of rights to do this. The usual distinctions that conservatives draw between moderation and excess, freedom and license, moral goods and material goods, rightful power and the abuse of power, will all do just fine.

As it is, the subject hardly comes up at all among conservatives, and what commentary we do hear usually takes the form of ridicule directed at animal-rights groups. Often conservatives side instinctively with any animal-related industry and those involved, as if a thing is right just because someone can make money off it or as if our sympathies belong always with the men just because they are men.

I had an exchange once with an eminent conservative columnist on this subject. Conversation turned to my book and to factory farming. Holding his hands out in the "stop" gesture, he said, "I don't want to know." Granted, life on the factory farm is no one's favorite subject, but conservative writers often have

to think about things that are disturbing or sad. In this case, we have an intellectually formidable fellow known to millions for his stern judgments on every matter of private morality and public policy. Yet nowhere in all his writings do I find any treatment of any cruelty issue, never mind that if you asked him he would surely agree that cruelty to animals is a cowardly and disgraceful sin.

AFFLUENT HUNTERS UNWIND BY **SHOOTING CAGE-REARED PHEASANTS AND OTHER BIRDS, FIRING AWAY AS THE FOWL OF THE AIR ARE RELEASED BEFORE THEM LIKE SKEET, WITH NO LIMIT ON THE DAY'S KILL.**

And when the subject is cruelty to farmed animals—the moral standards being applied in a fundamental human enterprise—suddenly we're in forbidden territory and "I don't want to know" is the best he can do. But don't we have a responsibility to know? Maybe the whole subject could use his fine mind and his good heart.

As for the rights of animals, rights in general are best viewed in tangible terms, with a view to actual events and consequences. Take the case of a hunter in Texas named John Lockwood, who has just pioneered the online safari. At his canned-hunting ranch outside San Antonio, he's got a rifle attached to a camera and the camera wired up to the Internet, so that sportsmen going to Live-shot.com will actually be able to fire at baited animals by remote control from their computers. "If the customer were to wound the animal," explains the *San Antonio Express-News*, "a staff person on site could finish it off." The "trophy mounts" taken in these heroics will then be prepared and shipped to the client's door, and if it catches on Lockwood will be a rich man.

Very much like animal farming today, the hunting "industry" has seen

a collapse in ethical standards, and only in such an atmosphere could Lockwood have found inspiration for this latest innovation—denying wild animals the last shred of respect. Under the laws of Texas and other states, Lockwood and others in his business use all sorts of methods once viewed as shameful: baits, blinds, fences to trap hunted animals in

ranches that advertise a "100-percent-guaranteed kill." Affluent hunters like to unwind by shooting cage-reared pheasants, ducks, and other birds, firing away as the fowl of the air are released before them like skeet, with no limit on the day's kill. Hunting supply stores are filled with lures, infrared lights, high-tech scopes, and other gadgetry to make every man a marksman.

Lockwood doesn't hear anyone protesting those methods, except for a few of those nutty activist types. Why shouldn't he be able to offer paying customers this new hunting experience as well? It is like asking a smut-peddler to please have the decency to keep children out of it. Lockwood is just one step ahead of the rest, and there is no standard of honor left to stop him.

First impressions are usually correct in questions of cruelty to animals, and here most of us would agree that Live-shot.com does not show our fellow man at his best. We would say that the whole thing is a little tawdry and even depraved, that the creatures Lockwood has "in stock" are not just commodities. We would say that these animals deserve better than the fate he has in store for them.

As is invariably the case in animal-rights issues, what we're really looking for are safeguards against cruel and presumptuous people. We are trying to hold people to their obligations, people who could spare us the trouble if only they would recognize a few limits on their own conduct.

Conservatives like the sound of "obligation" here, and those who reviewed *Dominion* were relieved to find me arguing more from this angle than from any notion of rights. "What the PETA crowd doesn't understand," Jonah Goldberg wrote, "or what it deliberately confuses, is that human compassion toward animals is an obligation of humans, not an entitlement for animals." Another commentator put the point in religious terms: "[W]e have a moral duty to respect the animal world as God's handiwork, treating animals with 'the mercy of our Maker' ... But mercy and respect for animals are completely different from rights for animals—and we should never confuse the two." Both writers confessed they were troubled by factory farming and concluded with the uplifting thought that we could all profit from further reflection on our obligation of kindness to farm animals.

The only problem with this insistence on obligation is that after a while it begins to sound like a hedge against actually being held to that obligation. It leaves us with a high-minded attitude but no accountability, free to act on our obligations or to ignore them without consequences, personally opposed to cruelty but unwilling to impose that view on others.

Treating animals decently is like most obligations we face, somewhere between the most and the least important, a modest but essential requirement to living with integrity. And it's not a good sign when arguments are constantly turned to precisely how much is mandatory and how much, therefore, we can manage to avoid.

If one is using the word “obligation” seriously, moreover, then there is no practical difference between an obligation on our end not to mistreat animals and an entitlement on their end not to be mistreated by us. Either way, we are required to do and not do the same things. And either way, somewhere down the logical line, the entitlement would have to arise from a recognition of the inherent dignity of a living creature. The moral standing of our fellow creatures may be humble, but it is absolute and not something within our power to confer or withhold. All creatures sing their Creator’s praises, as this truth is variously expressed in the Bible, and are dear to Him for their own sakes.

A certain moral relativism runs through the arguments of those hostile or indifferent to animal welfare—as if animals can be of value only for our sake, as utility or preference decrees. In practice, this outlook leaves each person to decide for himself when animals rate moral concern. It even allows us to accept or reject such knowable facts about animals as their cognitive and emotional capacities, their conscious experience of pain and happiness.

Elsewhere in contemporary debates, conservatives meet the foe of moral relativism by pointing out that, like it or not, we are all dealing with the same set of physiological realities and moral truths. We don’t each get to decide the facts of science on a situational basis. We do not each go about bestowing moral value upon things as it pleases us at the moment. Of course, we do not decide moral truth at all: we discern it. Human beings in their moral progress learn to appraise things correctly, using reasoned moral judgment to perceive a prior order not of our devising.

C.S. Lewis in *The Abolition of Man* calls this “the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes

are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are.” Such words as honor, piety, esteem, and empathy do not merely describe subjective states of mind, Lewis reminds us, but speak to objective qualities in the world beyond that merit those attitudes in us. “[T]o call children delightful or old men venerable,” he writes, “is not simply to record a psychological fact about our own parental or filial emotions at the moment, but to recognize a quality which *demands* a certain response from us whether we make it or not.”

This applies to questions of cruelty as well. A kindly attitude toward animals is not a subjective sentiment; it is the correct moral response to the objective value of a fellow creature. Here, too, rational and virtuous conduct consists in giving things their due and in doing so consistently. If one animal’s pain—say, that of one’s pet—is real and deserving of sympathy, then the pain of essentially identical animals is also meaningful, no

or help injured wildlife or donate to animal charities, those are fine things to do, but no one says you should be compelled to do them. Refraining from cruelty to animals is a different matter, an obligation of justice not for us each to weigh for ourselves. It is not simply unkind behavior, it is unjust behavior, and the prohibition against it is non-negotiable. Proverbs reminds us of this—“a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel”—and the laws of America and of every other advanced nation now recognize the wrongfulness of such conduct with our cruelty statutes. Often applying felony-level penalties to protect certain domestic animals, these state and federal statutes declare that even though your animal may elsewhere in the law be defined as your property, there are certain things you may not do to that creature, and if you are found harming or neglecting the animal, you will answer for your conduct in a court of justice.

A CERTAIN MORAL RELATIVISM RUNS THROUGH THE ARGUMENTS OF THOSE HOSTILE OR INDIFFERENT TO ANIMAL WELFARE—AS IF ANIMALS CAN BE OF VALUE ONLY FOR OUR SAKE, AS UTILITY OR PREFERENCE DECREES.

matter what conventional distinctions we have made to narrow the scope of our sympathy. If it is wrong to whip a dog or starve a horse or bait bears for sport or grossly abuse farm animals, it is wrong for all people in every place.

The problem with moral relativism is that it leads to capriciousness and the despotic use of power. And the critical distinction here is not between human obligations and animal rights, but rather between obligations of charity and obligations of justice.

Active kindness to animals falls into the former category. If you take in strays

There are various reasons the state has an interest in forbidding cruelty, one of which is that cruelty is degrading to human beings. The problem is that many thinkers on this subject have strained to find indirect reasons to explain why cruelty is wrong and thereby to force animal cruelty into the category of the victimless crime. The most common of these explanations asks us to believe that acts of cruelty matter only because the cruel person does moral injury to himself or sullies his character—as if the man is our sole concern and the cruelly treated animal is entirely incidental.

Once again, the best test of theory is a real-life example. In 2002, Judge Alan Glenn of Tennessee's Court of Criminal Appeals heard the case of a married couple named Johnson, who had been found guilty of cruelty to 350 dogs lying sick, starving, or dead in their puppy-mill kennel—a scene videotaped by police. Here is Judge Glenn's response to their supplications for mercy:

The victims of this crime were animals that could not speak up to the unbelievable conduct of Judy Fay Johnson and Stanley Paul Johnson that they suffered. Several of the dogs have died and most had physical problems such as intestinal worms, mange, eye problems, dental problems and emotional problems and socialization problems Watching this video of the conditions that these dogs were subjected to was one of the most deplorable things this Court has observed. . . .

[T]his Court finds that probation would not serve the ends of justice, nor be in the best interest of the public, nor would this have a deterrent effect for such gross behavior. . . . The victims were particularly vulnerable. You treated the victims with exceptional cruelty. . . .

There are those who would argue that you should be confined in a house trailer with no ventilation or in a cell three-by-seven with eight or ten other inmates with no plumbing, no exercise and no opportunity to feel the sun or smell fresh air. However, the courts of this land have held that such treatment is cruel and inhuman, and it is. You will not be treated in the same way that you treated these helpless animals that you abused to make a dollar.

Only in abstract debates of moral or legal theory would anyone quarrel with Judge Glenn's description of the animals as "victims" or deny that they were entitled to be treated better. Whether we call this a "right" matters little, least of all to the dogs, since the only right that any animal could possibly exercise is the right to be free from human abuse, neglect, or, in a fine old term of law, other "malicious mischief." What matters most is that prohibitions against human cruelty be hard and binding. The sullied souls of the Johnsons are for the Johnsons to worry about. The business of justice is to punish their offense and to protect the creatures from human wrongdoing. And in the end, just as in other matters of morality and justice, the interests of man are served by doing the right thing for its own sake.

There is only one reason for condemning cruelty that doesn't beg the question of exactly why cruelty is a wrong, a vice, or bad for our character: that the act of cruelty is an intrinsic evil. Animals cruelly dealt with are not just things, not just an irrelevant detail in some self-centered moral drama of our own. They matter in their own right, as they matter to their Creator, and the wrongs of cruelty are wrongs done to them. As *The Catholic Encyclopedia* puts this point, there is a "direct and essential sinfulness of cruelty to the animal world, irrespective of the results of such conduct on the character of those who practice it."

Our cruelty statutes are a good and natural development in Western law, codifying the claims of animals against human wrongdoing, and, with the wisdom of men like Judge Glenn, asserting those claims on their behalf. Such statutes, however, address mostly random or wanton acts of cruelty. And the persistent animal-welfare questions of our day center on institutional cruelties—on the vast and systematic mis-

treatment of animals that most of us never see.

Having conceded the crucial point that some animals rate our moral concern and legal protection, informed conscience turns naturally to other animals—creatures entirely comparable in their awareness, feeling, and capacity for suffering. A dog is not the moral equal of a human being, but a dog is definitely the moral equal of a pig, and it's only human caprice and economic convenience that say otherwise. We have the problem that these essentially similar creatures are treated in dramatically different ways, unjustified even by the very different purposes we have assigned to them. Our pets are accorded certain protections from cruelty, while the nameless creatures in our factory farms are hardly treated like animals at all. The challenge is one of consistency, of treating moral equals equally, and living according to fair and rational standards of conduct.

Whatever terminology we settle on, after all the finer philosophical points have been hashed over, the aim of the exercise is to prohibit wrongdoing. All rights, in practice, are protections against human wrongdoing, and here too the point is to arrive at clear and consistent legal boundaries on the things that one may or may not do to animals, so that every man is not left to be the judge in his own case.

More than obligation, moderation, ordered liberty, or any of the other lofty ideals we hold, what should attune conservatives to all the problems of animal cruelty—and especially to the modern factory farm—is our worldly side. The great virtue of conservatism is that it begins with a realistic assessment of human motivations. We know man as he is, not only the rational creature but also, as Socrates told us, the rationalizing creature, with a knack for finding an angle, an excuse, and a euphemism.

Whether it's the pornographer who thinks himself a free-speech champion or the abortionist who looks in the mirror and sees a reproductive health-care services provider, conservatives are familiar with the type.

So we should not be all that surprised when told that these very same capacities are often at work in the things that people do to animals—and all the more so in our \$125 billion a year livestock industry. The human mind, especially when there is money to be had, can manufacture grand excuses for the exploitation of other human beings. How much easier it is for people to excuse the wrongs done to lowly animals.

TO **MAXIMIZE THE USE OF SPACE** AND MINIMIZE THE NEED FOR CARE, THE CREATURES ARE **ENCASED ROW AFTER ROW**, FOUR- TO FIVE-HUNDRED POUND MAMMALS TRAPPED WITHOUT RELIEF INSIDE **IRON CRATES 22 INCHES WIDE**.

Where animals are concerned, there is no practice or industry so low that someone, somewhere, cannot produce a high-sounding reason for it. The sorriest little miscreant who shoots an elephant, lying in wait by the water hole in some canned-hunting operation, is just "harvesting resources," doing his bit for "conservation." The swarms of government-subsidized Canadian seal hunters slaughtering tens of thousands of newborn pups—hacking to death these unoffending creatures, even in sight of their mothers—offer themselves as the brave and independent bearers of tradition. With the same sanctimony and deep dishonesty, factory-farm corporations like Smithfield Foods, ConAgra, and Tyson Foods still cling to countrified brand names for their labels—Clear Run Farms, Murphy Family Farms, Happy Valley—to convince us and no doubt themselves, too, that they are engaged in something essential, wholesome, and honorable.

Yet when corporate farmers need barbed wire around their Family Farms and Happy Valleys and laws to prohibit outsiders from taking photographs (as is the case in two states) and still other laws to exempt farm animals from the definition of "animals" as covered in federal and state cruelty statutes, something is amiss. And if conservatives do nothing else about any other animal issue, we should attend at least to the factory farms, where the suffering is immense and we are all asked to be complicit.

If we are going to have our meats and other animal products, there are natural costs to obtaining them, defined by the duties of animal husbandry and of vet-

erinary ethics. Factory farming came about when resourceful men figured out ways of getting around those natural costs, applying new technologies to raise animals in conditions that would otherwise kill them by deprivation and disease. With no laws to stop it, moral concern surrendered entirely to economic calculation, leaving no limit to the punishments that factory farmers could inflict to keep costs down and profits up. Corporate farmers hardly speak anymore of "raising" animals, with the modicum of personal care that word implies. Animals are "grown" now, like so many crops. Barns somewhere along the way became "intensive confinement facilities" and the inhabitants mere "production units."

The result is a world in which billions of birds, cows, pigs, and other creatures are locked away, enduring miseries they do not deserve, for our convenience and pleasure. We belittle the activists with

their radical agenda, scarcely noticing the radical cruelty they seek to redress.

At the Smithfield mass-confinement hog farms I toured in North Carolina, the visitor is greeted by a bedlam of squealing, chain rattling, and horrible roaring. To maximize the use of space and minimize the need for care, the creatures are encased row after row, 400 to 500 pound mammals trapped without relief inside iron crates seven feet long and 22 inches wide. They chew maniacally on bars and chains, as foraging animals will do when denied straw, or engage in stereotypical nest-building with the straw that isn't there, or else just lie there like broken beings. The spirit of the place would be familiar to police who raided that Tennessee puppy-mill run by Stanley and Judy Johnson, only instead of 350 tortured animals, millions—and the law prohibits none of it.

Efforts to outlaw the gestation crate have been dismissed by various conservative critics as "silly," "comical," "ridiculous." It doesn't seem that way up close. The smallest scraps of human charity—a bit of maternal care, room to roam outdoors, straw to lie on—have long since been taken away as costly luxuries, and so the pigs know the feel only of concrete and metal. They lie covered in their own urine and excrement, with broken legs from trying to escape or just to turn, covered with festering sores, tumors, ulcers, lesions, or what my guide shrugged off as the routine "pus pockets."

C.S. Lewis's description of animal pain—"begun by Satan's malice and perpetrated by man's desertion of his post"—has literal truth in our factory farms because they basically run themselves through the wonders of automation, and the owners are off in spacious corporate offices reviewing their spreadsheets. Rarely are the creatures' afflictions examined by a vet or even noticed by the migrant laborers charged with

their care, unless of course some ailment threatens production—meaning who cares about a lousy ulcer or broken leg, as long as we're still getting the piglets?

Kept alive in these conditions only by antibiotics, hormones, laxatives, and other additives mixed into their machine-fed swill, the sows leave their crates only to be driven or dragged into other crates, just as small, to bring forth their piglets. Then it's back to the gestation crate for another four months, and so on back and forth until after seven or eight pregnancies they finally expire from the punishment of it or else are culled with a club or bolt-gun.

As you can see at www.factoryfarming.com/gallery.htm, industrial livestock farming operates on an economy of scale, presupposing a steady attrition rate. The usual comforting rejoinder we hear—that it's in the interest of farmers to take good care of their animals—is false. Each day, in every confinement farm in America, you will find cull pens littered with dead or dying creatures discarded like trash.

For the piglets, it's a regimen of teeth cutting, tail docking (performed with pliers, to heighten the pain of tail chewing and so deter this natural response to mass confinement), and other mutilations. After five or six months trapped in one of the grim warehouses that now pass for barns, they're trucked off, 355,000 pigs every day in the life of America, for processing at a furious pace of thousands per hour by migrants who use earplugs to muffle the screams. All of these creatures, and billions more across the earth, go to their deaths knowing nothing of life, and nothing of man, except the foul, tortured existence of the factory farm, having never even been outdoors.

But not to worry, as a Smithfield Foods executive assured me, "They love it." It's all "for their own good." It is a voice conservatives should instantly

recognize, as we do when it tells us that the fetus feels nothing. Everything about the picture shows bad faith, moral sloth, and endless excuse-making, all readily answered by conservative arguments.

We are told "they're just pigs" or cows or chickens or whatever and that only urbanites worry about such things, estranged as they are from the realities of rural life. Actually, all of factory farming proceeds by a massive denial of reality—the reality that pigs and other animals are not just production units to be endlessly exploited but living creatures with natures and needs. The very modesty of those needs—their humble desires for straw, soil, sunshine—is the gravest indictment of the men who deny them.

Conservatives are supposed to revere tradition. Factory farming has no traditions, no rules, no codes of honor, no little decencies to spare for a fellow creature. The whole thing is an abandonment of rural values and a betrayal of honorable animal husbandry—to say nothing of veterinary medicine, with its sworn oath to "protect animal health" and to "relieve animal suffering."

FACTORY FARMING HAS NO TRADITIONS, NO RULES, NO CODES OF HONOR. THE WHOLE THING IS A BETRAYAL OF HONORABLE ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

Likewise, we are told to look away and think about more serious things. Human beings simply have far bigger problems to worry about than the well being of farm animals, and surely all of this zeal would be better directed at causes of human welfare.

You wouldn't think that men who are unwilling to grant even a few extra inches in cage space, so that a pig can turn around, would be in any position to fault others for pettiness. Why are small acts of kindness beneath us, but not small acts of cruelty? The larger problem with this appeal to moral priority,

however, is that we are dealing with suffering that occurs through human agency. Whether it's miserliness here, carelessness there, or greed throughout, the result is rank cruelty for which particular people must answer.

Since refraining from cruelty is an obligation of justice, moreover, there is no avoiding the implications. All the goods invoked in defense of factory farming, from the efficiency and higher profits of the system to the lower costs of the products, are false goods unjustly derived. No matter what right and praiseworthy things we are doing elsewhere in life, when we live off a cruel and disgraceful thing like factory farming, we are to that extent living unjustly, and that is hardly a trivial problem.

For the religious-minded, and Catholics in particular, no less an authority than Pope Benedict XVI has explained the spiritual stakes. Asked recently to weigh in on these very questions, Cardinal Ratzinger told German journalist Peter Seewald that animals must be respected as our "companions in creation." While it is licit to use them for

food, "we cannot just do whatever we want with them. ... Certainly, a sort of industrial use of creatures, so that geese are fed in such a way as to produce as large a liver as possible, or hens live so packed together that they become just caricatures of birds, this degrading of living creatures to a commodity seems to me in fact to contradict the relationship of mutuality that comes across in the Bible."

Factory farmers also assure us that all of this is an inevitable stage of industrial efficiency. Leave aside the obvious reply that we could all do a lot of things in life more efficiently if we didn't have to trou-

ble ourselves with ethical restraints. Leave aside, too, the tens of billions of dollars in annual federal subsidies that have helped megafarms undermine small family farms and the decent communities that once surrounded them and to give us the illusion of cheap products. And never mind the collateral damage to land, water, and air that factory farms cause and the more billions of dollars it costs taxpayers to clean up after them. Factory farming is a predatory enterprise, absorbing profit and externalizing costs, unnaturally propped up by political influence and government subsidies much as factory-farmed animals are unnaturally sustained by hormones and antibiotics.

Even if all the economic arguments were correct, conservatives usually aren't impressed by breathless talk of inevitable progress. I am asked sometimes how a conservative could possibly care about animal suffering in factory farms, but the question is premised on a liberal caricature of conservatism—the assumption that, for all of our fine talk about moral values, “compassionate conservatism” and the like, everything we really care about can be counted in dollars. In the case of factory farming, and the conservative's blithe tolerance of it, the caricature is too close to the truth.

Exactly how far are we all prepared to follow these industrial and technological advances before pausing to take stock of where things stand and where it is all tending? Very soon companies like Smithfield plan to have tens of millions of cloned animals in their factory farms. Other companies are at work genetically engineering chickens without feathers so that one day all poultry farmers might be spared the toil and cost of de-feathering their birds. For years, the many skills for our livestock industry employed in the “Animal Science” and “Meat Science” departments of rural universities (we used to call them Animal Husbandry

departments) have been tampering with the genes of pigs and other animals to locate and expunge that part of their genetic makeup that makes them stressed in factory farm conditions—taking away the desire to protect themselves and to live. Instead of redesigning the factory farm to suit the animals, they are redesigning the animals to suit the factory farm.

Are there no boundaries of nature and elementary ethics that the conservative should be the first to see? The hubris of

with singular moral dignity but no singular moral accountability to go with it.

Lofty talk about humanity's special status among creatures only invites such questions as: what would the Good Shepherd make of our factory farms? Where does the creature of conscience get off lording it over these poor creatures so mercilessly? “How is it possible,” as Malcolm Muggeridge asked in the years when factory farming began to spread, “to look for God and sing his praises while insulting and degrading his creatures? If, as I

FACTORY FARMING IS A **PREDATORY ENTERPRISE**, UNNATURALLY PROPPED UP BY **POLITICAL INFLUENCE** AND **GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES** MUCH AS FACTORY-FARMED ANIMALS ARE **UNNATURALLY SUSTAINED** BY HORMONES AND ANTIBIOTICS.

such projects is beyond belief, only more because of the foolish and frivolous goods to be gained—blood-free meats and the perfect pork chop.

No one who does not profit from them can look at our modern factory farms or frenzied slaughter plants or agricultural laboratories with their featherless chickens and fear-free pigs and think, “Yes, this is humanity at our finest—exactly as things should be.” Devils charged with designing a farm could hardly have made it more severe. Least of all should we look for sanction in Judeo-Christian morality, whose whole logic is one of gracious condescension, of the proud learning to be humble, the higher serving the lower, and the strong protecting the weak.

Those religious conservatives who, in every debate over animal welfare, rush to remind us that the animals themselves are secondary and man must come first are exactly right—only they don't follow their own thought to its moral conclusion. Somehow, in their pious notions of stewardship and dominion, we always seem to end up

had thought, all lambs are the Agnus Dei, then to deprive them of light and the field and their joyous frisking and the sky is the worst kind of blasphemy.”

The writer B.R. Meyers remarked in *The Atlantic*, “research could prove that cows love Jesus, and the line at the McDonald's drive-through wouldn't be one sagging carload shorter the next day Has any generation in history ever been so ready to cause so much suffering for such a trivial advantage? We deaden our consciences to enjoy—for a few minutes a day—the taste of blood, the feel of our teeth meeting through muscle.”

That is a cynical but serious indictment, and we must never let it be true of us in the choices we each make or urge upon others. If reason and morality are what set human beings apart from animals, then reason and morality must always guide us in how we treat them, or else it's all just caprice, unbridled appetite with the pretense of piety. When people say that they like their pork chops, veal, or *foie gras* just too much ever to give them up, reason hears in that the voice of gluttony, willfulness,

or at best moral complaisance. What makes a human being human is precisely the ability to understand that the suffering of an animal is more important than the taste of a treat.

Of the many conservatives who reviewed *Dominion*, every last one conceded that factory farming is a wretched business and a betrayal of human responsibility. So it should be a short step to agreement that it also constitutes a serious issue of law and public policy. Having granted that certain practices are abusive, cruel, and wrong, we must be prepared actually to do something about them.

Among animal activists, of course, there are some who go too far—there are in the best of causes. But fairness requires that we judge a cause by its best advocates instead of making straw men

and pork producers will benefit from the long-term results of a livestock agriculture-friendly agenda.” But this is no tribute. And millions of good people who live in what’s left of America’s small family-farm communities would themselves rejoice if the president were to announce that he is prepared to sign a bipartisan bill making some basic reforms in livestock agriculture.

Bush’s new agriculture secretary, former Nebraska Gov. Mike Johanns, has shown a sympathy for animal welfare. He and the president might both be surprised at the number and variety of supporters such reforms would find in the Congress, from Republicans like Chris Smith and Elton Gallegly in the House to John Ensign and Rick Santorum in the Senate, along with Democrats such as Robert Byrd, Barbara

with farms we could imagine without wincing, photograph without prosecution, and explain without excuses.

The law would uphold not only the elementary standards of animal husbandry but also of veterinary ethics, following no more complicated a principle than that pigs and cows should be able to walk and turn around, fowl to move about and spread their wings, and all creatures to know the feel of soil and grass and the warmth of the sun. No need for labels saying “free-range” or “humanely raised.” They will all be raised that way. They all get to be treated like animals and not as unfeeling machines.

On a date certain, mass confinement, sow gestation crates, veal crates, battery cages, and all such innovations would be prohibited. This will end livestock agriculture’s moral race to the bottom and turn the ingenuity of its scientists toward compassionate solutions. It will remove the federal support that unnaturally serves agribusiness at the expense of small farms. And it will shift economies of scale, turning the balance in favor of humane farmers—as those who run companies like Wal-Mart could do right now by taking their business away from factory farms.

In all cases, the law would apply to corporate farmers a few simple rules that better men would have been observing all along: we cannot just take from these creatures, we must give them something in return. We owe them a merciful death, and we owe them a merciful life. And when human beings cannot do something humanely, without degrading both the creatures and ourselves, then we should not do it at all. ■

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HAVING GRANTED THAT CERTAIN PRACTICES ARE **ABUSIVE, CRUEL, AND WRONG**,
WE MUST BE PREPARED ACTUALLY **TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM.**

of the worst. There isn’t much money in championing the cause of animals, so we’re dealing with some pretty altruistic people who on that account alone deserve the benefit of the doubt.

If we’re looking for fitting targets for inquiry and scorn, for people with an angle and a truly pernicious influence, better to start with groups like Smithfield Foods (my candidate for the worst corporation in America in its ruthlessness to people and animals alike), the National Pork Producers Council (a reliable Republican contributor), or the various think tanks in Washington subsidized by animal-use industries for intellectual cover.

After the last election, the National Pork Producers Council rejoiced, “President Bush’s victory ensures that the U.S. pork industry will be very well positioned for the next four years politically,

Boxer, or the North Carolina congressman who called me in to say that he, too, was disgusted and saddened by hog farming in his state.

If such matters were ever brought to President Bush’s attention in a serious way, he would find in the details of factory farming many things abhorrent to the Christian heart and to his own kindly instincts. Even if he were to drop into relevant speeches a few of the prohibited words in modern industrial agriculture (*cruel, humane, compassionate*), instead of endlessly flattering corporate farmers for virtues they lack, that alone would help to set reforms in motion.

We need our conservative values voters to get behind a Humane Farming Act so that we can all quit averting our eyes. This reform, a set of explicit federal cruelty statutes with enforcement funding to back it up, would leave us

[no dumbing down]

What Education Crisis?

Johnny still can't read—but that's nothing new.

By Gregory Cochran

MANY ARE UNDER the impression that American education is in decline. But they're wrong. Average educational achievement has been fairly stable for 60 years or more.

Why, you may ask, do they think that there has been decline? People have lots of reasons for thinking this. Not good reasons, but reasons. Many rely on personal observations—anecdotes, really. Some recall how all middle-school kids read "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha" and the *Congressional Record* back in their day. Of course, you can't rely on that kind of anecdotal evidence any more than you can predict election results by polling your three best friends. For every anecdote that supports a point, there is another that undermines it. Back in my day, my fourth-grade teacher said that you couldn't see the moon in the daytime and that anteaters ate dead people. Experience has proven her wrong.

Sometimes people assume that their obviously unusual experience is typical. They attended More Science High School and casually assume that everyone else did too. I am reminded of the little old lady of my acquaintance who informed me that being a young mother was much easier in her day since back then everyone had servants.

In a typical example, the comparison is between the performances of a high-school graduate in 1900 and today. Back in 1900, 6.4 percent of kids graduated

from high school, while today around 70 percent do. The top 6 percent are going to score higher than the top 70 percent, all else equal, just as the tallest men of 1900 were taller than the average man today. But that hardly proves that the average man has gotten shorter or that the average 18-year-old today knows less than the average 18-year-old did in 1900. A high-school degree doesn't mean what it used to—but that doesn't indicate that education has declined. If I misused my mystic powers and conferred a Ph.D. on every man, woman, and child in the United States, a Ph.D. wouldn't mean what it used to, but no one would know any less than he did the day before.

Making essentially the same error, declinists often cite tests given to unrepresentative samples. People love to talk about average changes in SAT results, but that's a terrible source of data for comparisons, mainly because there are vast differences in the fraction of kids who take the SAT in different states and substantial differences between different years. There's nothing wrong with the SAT in terms of predicting college performance, but it isn't given to a representative picture of the student population. In New Jersey, about 40 percent of seniors take the SAT, while roughly 10 percent take it in Iowa, where people are more likely to take the ACT. That 10 percent in Iowa that is hoping to go to Stanford or Yale scores higher, on aver-

age, than the 40 percent taking it in New Jersey, but any state's top 10 percent will beat another state's top 40.

People are also confused by ethnic change. The classic example would be a school in the Bronx, where 50 years ago the students were Jewish but now most are Puerto Rican. Test scores have declined dramatically. Doesn't this mean that education has gone to the dogs? No. Jewish kids do well (on average) in every kind of school, while blacks and Hispanics do poorly in every kind of school—rich or poor, slum or suburb. This "changing neighborhoods" pattern can be very confusing because in fact black and Hispanic students are doing noticeably better than they once did, although they still lag behind white students. Particular schools can go downhill when one group replaces another while at the same time the average score of every ethnic group is stable or increasing. These improvements definitely suggest that going from very bad conditions (as in the case of black schools in South some decades ago) to more typical conditions does increase academic performance. The problem is that we don't how to increase it further. The black-white academic gap did narrow in the 1960s and 1970s, but over the last 20 years it has been stable.

George Will once wrote a column that is a classic example of this kind of confusion—Pulitzer-level confusion. He noted that North Dakota had some of

the highest test scores in the nation and suggested that the reason was a low divorce and illegitimacy rate. Will looked at SAT scores. That's a snare and a delusion: since few kids in North Dakota take that test, they're a highly unrepresentative group. But if you look at NAEP scores, which are representative, kids from North Dakota do indeed score high—in some years the highest in the country. In 1996, North Dakota was first in 8th-grade math scores, 45th in spending.

What was their secret? Well, it helps if you notice that the average math score of white students in North Dakota was 286, while the national white average was 285. The secret is having few blacks and Hispanics, combined with an educational system that is otherwise average (although cheap).

Some get it almost right: they run large, nationally representative surveys of academic performance. Those surveys show that the average American doesn't know all that much, then they cite the results as evidence of educational decline. But if I whip out my tape measure and find that Danny Devito is short, it hardly means that he's shrunk. If memory serves, he's always been short. To show decline, you need before and after data.

We have some. There are three representative, technically sound surveys that go back many years: Iowa Test of Basic Skills (1940s to early 1990s), the SAT's national norm studies (covers the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1970-present). The average NAEP reading score was 285 in 1971, 288 in 1999. The average math score was 304 in 1973, 308 in 1999, while the science score dropped from 305 in 1970 to 295 in 1999. Averaged over the three subjects, test scores dropped from 298 to 297—a one-point change.

When you think about it, this stability—or should we call it stagnation?—is just what you would expect. It is notoriously difficult to improve test scores materially. The Coleman Report, back in the '60s, found that the amount of money spent didn't have much effect on educational results: "Schools are remarkably similar in the effect they have on the achievement of their pupils when the socioeconomic background of the students is taken into account."

More depends on the student than the school—a lot more. This has been thoroughly demonstrated, most dramatically when Federal District Judge Russell Clark seized control of the Kansas City schools back in 1985. The judge ordered the school district and the state to spend nearly \$2 billion on educational improvements. As Paul Ciotti of the Cato Institute says,

For more than a decade, the Kansas City district got more money per pupil than any other of the 280 major school districts in the country. Yet in spite of having perhaps the finest facilities of any school district its size in the country, nothing changed. Test scores stayed put, the three-grade-level achievement gap between blacks and whites did not change, and the dropout rate went up, not down.

To be fair, this only means that spending money in the currently fashionable ways doesn't have much effect on student performance. There may well be some way of turning dollars into scholars. We just don't know how. I have plenty of ideas that might work, such as bringing back caning or somehow persuading cheerleaders to forsake the football team for the chess club. Perhaps we should call in the attorney general: if Gonzales has ways of making them talk, maybe he can make them learn too.

Supposed decay has been going on for a long time. The *New York Times* once administered a U.S. history test to a sample of Ivy League freshmen. The results were horrifying and led to a Pulitzer. "College freshmen throughout the nation reveal a striking ignorance of even the most elementary aspects of United States history, and know almost nothing about many important phases of this country's growth and development, a survey just completed by The New York Times has shown." Hot news from April 4, 1943. The *New York Times* administered a very similar history test in 1976, which included some of the same questions. College freshmen again did poorly—just about as poorly as in 1943.

Adolescent test scores, which are what we measure with the SAT or NAEP, do not tell us what we really want to know. That's kid stuff. What information

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do people retain and (hopefully) use in their lives? Adult knowledge is the real test of the educational system. The test scores we usually talk about are really measures of intermediate output: we don't want to end up like the Soviets, always increasing steel production while somehow forgetting to manufacture a corresponding amount of steel products.

We probably need a broader definition of the educational system: not just school daze but all the other channels that might educate the public—books, newspapers, magazines, job experience, yes, even dreaded TV. A lot of information must be transmitted by formal schooling, but if people are now learning certain facts by other channels (learning about Ockham's razor from watching old episodes of "The Rockford Files," or about zero-point energy by watching "The Incredibles," say) that's fine. The question is how much people end up knowing.

Jon Miller has run surveys of general science knowledge for about a quarter of a century. The tests are aimed pretty

interviewed a random sample at Harvard graduation, asking them what caused the seasons. Twenty-one out of 23 interviewed were wrong, and worse yet, they all had the same wrong idea: they thought that the Earth's orbit is egg-shaped and that winter comes when we're farthest from the Sun. In other words, average Americans understand nothing about science and technology and never have: about 5 percent could get a decent grade on an 8th-grade science exam.

But this isn't evidence of decline: scores have in fact gone up slightly over the past 25 years. Miller's test didn't exist 50 years ago, but we have the results of similar questions in other surveys of that era, and the greatest generation knew even less than people today. Nor is it evidence of relative failure. Miller has administered the same test to representative samples of citizens of the European Union. They're just as ignorant as we are, while China is far worse.

There have been surveys touching upon civic and political knowledge over the years, and many political scientists have analyzed the hilarious results. John

innocence and that the president has the power to suspend the Constitution. Only one in seven Americans between 18 and 24 could even find Iraq on the map in 2002. When it comes to political and civic knowledge, Americans are profoundly ignorant and always have been.

This state of affairs is more than a bit alarming. Obviously the typical citizen votes by intuition—or possibly by sense of smell. What can and should be done? Education hasn't declined, but people don't seem to know much about history or biology, and surely that's bad. Even highly educated people usually don't know much outside of their own fields, and it's not just the two-culture problem, where science and literature never seem to meet. The typical young Ph.D. in physics can't pass a high-school exam in biology.

Perhaps people don't want to know. Most only remember information acquired in school when they need to use it routinely in work or when it happens to be a subject that fascinates them. It's like the classic book review the 10-year-old girl gave: "This book gives me more information about penguins than I care to have."

Systematic pilot studies of innovative educational methods are worthwhile. We've not had much success along those lines, but then we've seldom tried. Of course we'd have to treat them like experiments rather than religions, acknowledge failure when it occurs, and above all keep education majors from having anything to do with the process.

As for the professional declinists like William Bennett, he can talk, he can exhort, he can pick up \$50,000 speaking fees for a talk that doesn't include one bit of serious thought, but if he wants actually to change anything, I have to say the odds are against him. ■

Gregory Cochran is a physicist and evolutionary biologist.

WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL AND CIVIC KNOWLEDGE, AMERICANS ARE PROFOUNDLY IGNORANT AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.

low—roughly middle school. A typical question asks whether the Sun goes around the Earth or the Earth around the Sun. Those who got that right were asked whether the Earth took a day, a week, a month, or a year to orbit the Sun. About 50 percent of American adults know that the Earth orbits the Sun in a year. Less than 10 percent know what a molecule is, while only 20 percent have some vague idea what DNA is.

It's not easy to find surveys of elite knowledge, but what we know isn't encouraging. Some years ago researchers

Ferejohn summarizes the typical reaction: "Nothing strikes the student of public opinion and democracy more forcefully than the paucity of information most people possess about politics." In the '50s, only 19 percent of the public could name three branches of the federal government, while 35 percent could define the Electoral College. In recent years, 45 percent thought the phrase "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" was in the Constitution. Half thought that an accused person must prove his

[tyranny of the majority]

Baghdad Isn't Berlin

Free elections and popular power entail grave risks for the Middle East.

By Tom Switzer

WHEN NEOCONSERVATIVES rose to intellectual prominence in the 1970s, they were invariably described—not least by themselves—as “liberals mugged by reality.” Three decades later, that definition will acquire even more resonance if the neoconservative effort to remake Iraq as a viable and peaceful democratic state ends in failure.

Recently, of course, the consensus about the Bush administration's record in Iraq and the broader Middle East has been far from negative. Even opponents of the U.S.-led invasion have good things to say about President Bush's foreign policy agenda. “The most difficult sentence in the English language,” concedes the *Toronto Star's* Richard Gwyn, “is short and simple. It is this: Bush was right.” A *Le Monde* editorial titled “Arab Spring” concedes “the merit of George W. Bush.” The *Guardian's* Jonathan Freedland says, “the dark cloud of the Iraq war may have carried a silver lining.” *Der Spiegel's* Claus Christian Malzahn compares President Bush's beligerence towards Arab dictators to President Reagan's rollback of the Soviet Empire. And left-wing politicians from Teddy Kennedy in the U.S. to Piero Fassino in Italy admit Saddam Hussein's downfall has intensified pressure for democracy in the Middle East.

No wonder neoconservatives are giddy about the prospects for democratizing the Middle East—and not just the Kristol-Kagan-Krauthammer cabal either.

According to Lebanese socialist leader Walid Jumblatt, “It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq.” Jumblatt—who had earlier said, “We are all happy when an American soldier is killed” in Iraq and who had complained it was “too bad” that Paul Wolfowitz escaped a rocket blast at his Baghdad hotel in October 2003—now says, “The Syrian people, the Egyptian people, all say that something is changing. The Berlin Wall has fallen.”

Is this really true? Are we witnessing the dawn of a global democratic revolution? And will we, as leading neocon Richard Perle has predicted, “look back on the liberation of Iraq and the subsequent establishment of a decent, humane government there as a turning point in history”?

Certainly such hopes will be boosted in the wake of last month's belated appointments of Iraq's president, Kurdish rebel leader Jalal Talabani, and his two (Shi'ite and Sunni) vice presidents. And indeed it would be wrong and churlish to dismiss the significance of what has happened across the region in recent months. The Palestinian elections, the Iraqi elections, Saudi Arabia's first municipal elections, Hosni Mubarak's call for political pluralism in Egypt, and the massive anti-Syrian mobilization in Lebanon—all of this appears to confirm everything that the president says about the universal

yearning for freedom. Give individuals a right to choose their own leaders, and they will seize the moment. Who could forget the images of brave Iraqis dodging bullets at the ballot box?

Yes, yes, yes, all true. But that being acknowledged, it is well to remember that these are early days and although Iraq's long political stalemate is apparently drawing to a close, there is still treacherous ground to cover. There are serious reasons to be tentative in one's judgment of the changes taking place not only in Iraq but in the broader Middle East today. Indeed, far from ushering in a new era of democratic prosperity, the “Arab Spring” could lead to a period of virulent anti-Americanism and Islamic extremism.

After all, one election does not a democracy make. To work, democracy requires, among other things, a consensus among the major religious and regional groups that they are one people. And it requires that the losers respect the rights of the winners to rule and the electoral majority respect the rights of the minority to the untrammelled benefits of civil society—including freedom of speech, organization, religion, and an impartial judicial system. That is, a democracy has to embrace the idea of a loyal opposition.

One only has to look at the results of the Jan. 30 elections—how the south voted overwhelmingly for the Shi'ite bloc, how the north voted likewise for

the Kurds, and how the Sunni vote was repressed in the middle—to see that the Iraqis do not have a sense of being one people. Far from dividing on nationwide issues, they behaved as distinct regional communities, voting as their religious and ethnic interests dictated. Indeed, the dominant groups occupying distinct parts of the country are so wary of one another that it's more appropriate to refer to three Iraqi peoples. (Whatever happened, incidentally, to the party of the provisional government's Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, which ostensibly carried the flag for Western secular liberal values? It lost badly and has been isolated and removed from power.)

Then there is the issue of minority rights. Winning an election is one thing; losing it is another thing altogether—particularly in an arbitrarily created state and ethnically and tribally fractured society that, unlike post-war Germany and Japan, has had no real experience with the rule of law and all the institutions that democracy needs in order to flourish. If the Sunnis continue to resent their loss of power brought about by Saddam's downfall and to fear religious persecution at the hands of the Shi'ite majority, they might think that their only recourse is violence.

Even Larry Diamond, a former senior adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad who is a leading expert on democratization, recognizes the problem. "Unless a way is found to incorporate [the principal Sunni tribal and religious constituencies] through direct negotiations, which give meaningful positions to individuals chosen by these communities themselves, the insurgency will continue." Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* on April 14, he warned, "Only if disaffected Sunni leaders are given a real stake in the new political order will they take the kind of rhetorical and organizational steps that will lead their communities to cease the

violent struggle and to expel the foreign jihadists who are helping to wage it." The insurgency that inflames the Sunni heartland suggests that the signs are far from promising.

True, more than 60 Sunni clerics and scholars, who supported a boycott of the election, recently encouraged Sunni Iraqis to join the nation's fledgling army in order to prevent things from falling apart. Attacks on coalition forces have declined in recent months. And several conciliatory gestures—from the offers of amnesty to Sunni insurgents to the appointment of a Sunni parliamentary speaker—are all part of a fresh national reconciliation campaign.

But Sunni leaders have also called for attacks against Shi'ites, and bombs have killed hundreds of Shi'ites in retaliation for their routine killings of Sunnis suspected of Ba'athist ties. The Shi'ite-dominated United Iraqi Alliance, moreover, has defied the Pentagon's warnings and is demanding the purge of Sunni security forces left over from Saddam's era—a move that could encourage more

would obviously be an improvement over Saddam's gulag. But the prospect of a collapse of the Iraqi state, where three peoples use democracy to break away from each other, or a civil war, where those three peoples fight a new war of their own, seems a real possibility as soon as the coalition withdraws its troops.

There is another reason to be wary of democracy's prospects in the Middle East: elections can lead to unintended consequences. In November 2003, President Bush said, "For too long many people in the region have been victims and subjects; they deserve to be active citizens."

But what if "active citizens" in Palestine freely elect the Hamas leader? What if "active citizens" in Saudi Arabia prefer an Islamist zealot in the mold of Osama bin Laden to a moderate reformer like Crown Prince Abdullah? What if "active citizens" in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon bring to power jihadists and terrorist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood or Hezbollah? And what if the dominant

WHAT IF "ACTIVE CITIZENS" IN PALESTINE **FREELY ELECT THE HAMAS LEADER?** WHAT IF "ACTIVE CITIZENS" IN SAUDI ARABIA **PREFER AN ISLAMIST ZEALOT** IN THE MOLD OF **OSAMA BIN LADEN** TO A MODERATE REFORMER LIKE CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH?

Ba'athist officials to join the insurgency. Add to this the increasingly independent Kurds, who will not even allow Arab units of the new Iraqi military onto their territory, and you may well have a prescription for an unbreakable cycle of violence.

Of course, a complicated semi-federal structure could somehow emerge in Iraq, and the predominant Shi'ites and resentful Sunnis could reach some limited partial accommodation. Such an outcome, to be sure,

Shi'ite political figure in the new Iraq government, Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari, seeks inspiration and guidance from Iran's mullahs?

The point here is that because these nations are still modernizing, they are open to all the disturbing and dislocating ideological forces that this process can unleash, which is why democracy could degenerate into plebiscites that, far from leading to moderate and sensible governments, would only add legitimacy to authoritarianism and extrem-

ism. In the early '90s, fundamentalist Islamists won free and more or less fair elections in Algeria.

There is another way of looking at this. Try selling the people of Cairo, Damascus, or Riyadh a liberal secular agenda—a bill of rights that gives infidels the right to preach, homosexuals the right to practice, Larry Flynt and Salman Rushdie the right to publish, and every woman and wife the right to fornicate freely and have an abortion—and you'd want the authoritarian dictators to save you from the will of the "active citizens."

With Iraq giving every sense of turning into an open-ended Mesopotamian morass from which there seems to be no exit, it is hardly surprising that Wilsonian imperialists hope to see a proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. But the triumphalist cheering over the recent changes in the Muslim world may turn out to be, at best, seriously premature and, at worse, just plain wrong.

George W. Bush has made a song and dance about how "the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad will be recorded, alongside the fall of the Berlin Wall, as one of the great moments in the history of liberty." But as that liberal hawk Thomas Friedman has conceded that the wall "will fall one bloody brick at a time and, unfortunately, Vaclav Havel, Lech Walesa and Solidarity are not waiting to jump into our arms on the other side." There is a real possibility that the more democratic the Middle East becomes, the more Islamist, authoritarian, and anti-American it will be. If indeed that happens, those misguided idealists who signed up for this misbegotten venture will well and truly get mugged by reality. ■

Tom Switzer is opinion page editor of The Australian in Sydney. These are his personal views.

[banned parenthood]

Fathers Into Felons

No-fault divorce has turned a bastion of private life into a colony of the state.

By Stephen Baskerville

BY ALL INDICATIONS, we are gearing up for a major cultural and political war over the family. Opposition to same-sex marriage has tapped a vein of grassroots outrage that may run deeper than most observers imagine, with implications extending to the welfare state, the judiciary, and the most fundamental questions about the role of government. Conservatives who warn that family breakdown will lead to civilizational collapse sometimes seem incapable of recognizing the fulfillment of their prophecies.

The family crisis is generally attributed to deteriorating moral norms stemming from the sexual revolution. Yet the warfare over marriage is as much political as cultural, though basic political questions are conspicuously avoided: what precisely is the legal status of marriage, and what is the appropriate role of the state in private families and households? What are the relations of church and state insofar as each claims authority over marriage?

Family scholar Bryce Christensen likens the family crisis to the Civil War, with constitutional implications that could prove equally profound. G.K. Chesterton once suggested that the family serves as the principal check on government power and predicted that someday the two would directly confront one another. Same-sex marriage is

just one indication that that day has arrived.

Another is the administration's plan to redirect welfare funds for marriage education. Adapting Clinton-era fatherhood initiatives, the program is justified on the principle that marriage is a public institution conferring public benefits. "The time has come to recognize that marriage is a public social good," writes Alliance for Marriage President Matt Daniels. "The health of American families—built upon marriage—affects us all."

Yet the public nature of marriage is a truism that requires some qualification. The common-law tradition has long treated the family as a preserve of privacy that is largely off-limits to government—what Justice Byron White called a "realm of family life which the state cannot enter."

Family inviolability was never absolute, but the basic principle has been established for centuries and most emphatically in connection with what traditionalists point out is the unique and foremost purpose of marriage: raising children. The private family creates a legal bond between parent and child that allows parents (within reasonable limits) to raise their children free from government interference. "Whatever else it may accomplish, marriage acknowledges and secures the relation

between a child and a particular set of parents," Susan Shell writes in *The Public Interest*. "The right to one's own children ... is perhaps the most basic individual right—so basic we hardly think of it."

Federal courts have long recognized parenthood as a "sacred" and "inherent, natural right," "far more precious than property rights," and "for the protection of which, just as much as for the protection of the rights of the individual to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, our government is formed." Shell summarizes assumptions that, until recently, have been virtually universal among free societies: "No known government, however brutal or tyrannical, has ever denied, in fact or principle, the fundamental claim of parents to their children. ... A government that distributed children randomly ... could not be other than tyrannical. Even if it had the best interest of society in mind ... a government that paid no regard to the claims of biological parenthood would be unacceptable to all but the most fanatical of egalitarian or communitarian zealots."

As a statement of society's moral consensus Shell's point is unexceptionable. Yet it also illustrates the ignorance pervading current debates. For current marriage law has both validated her point and negated her fact: "No known government" ever crossed this line until about 30 years ago, well before same-sex marriage, when most of the Western democracies did so. It is having precisely the consequences she postulates.

Shell's principle also highlights an anomaly glossed over in official efforts to reverse family decline. Invoking the public benefits of marriage to justify state intervention in citizens' private lives and even to define—and potentially redefine—marriage would appear self-defeating. "No one would argue that crime and child poverty in America are not the business of government," writes

Daniels. "And no one wants to see the government turn a blind eye to the social trends that are doing the most damage to American children." Daniels makes a powerful case, but he never distinguishes the public's interest from the state's. Government is not a neutral player.

Governments have always claimed control over marriage, whether solemnized religiously or civilly. Some libertarians now propose privatizing marriage as a strictly civil contract. Yet whatever the state's precise role in marriage formation, politically it is far less important than another question. The institutional strength of marriage—and its connection with larger issues of public policy—is determined not by the words through which a marriage is formed but by the deeds through which a marriage is dissolved.

THOUGH TRADITIONALISTS DECRY EFFORTS TO REDEFINE MARRIAGE, THE FUNDAMENTAL REDEFINITION HAS **ALREADY BEEN EFFECTED** BY THE LITTLE-UNDERSTOOD SYSTEM OF "NO-FAULT" DIVORCE.

Here the critical players, as both sides recognize, are not homosexuals but heterosexuals. "The problem today is not gay couples wanting to get married," writes Jonathan Rauch. "The threat to marriage is straight couples not wanting to get married or ... not staying married." The demand to recognize same-sex marriage is clearly a symptom of how weakened marriage has already become.

It is futile to try to assess the strength of marriage as an institution or understand its civic role without confronting its nemesis: divorce. Though traditionalists decry efforts to redefine marriage, the fundamental redefinition has already been effected by the little-understood system of "no-fault" divorce.

Some three decades ago, the Western world embarked on one of the boldest experiments in its history. With no public discussion of the implications, laws were enacted in virtually every jurisdiction that effectively ended marriage as a legal contract. Regardless of the terms by which a marriage is entered, government officials can now, at the request of one spouse, simply dissolve it over the objection of the other and with no penalty to the moving party. Maggie Gallagher titled her 1996 book *The Abolition of Marriage*. It is difficult to see how same-sex marriage can weaken an institution that has been abolished, nor how a constitutional amendment can protect a contract that is already unenforceable.

Divorce and unmarried childbearing have political consequences we are only beginning to understand since they

serve as major engines for the overall expansion of government. Daniels is undeniably correct that family dissolution breeds social ills for governments to solve: violent crime, drug abuse, and truancy are directly attributable to family breakdown and fatherless homes. The obvious political implications are studiously avoided. "If we want less government, we must have stronger families," President Jimmy Carter once remarked, "for government steps in by necessity when families have failed."

Carter may have perceived the cause and effect backward, for it follows that government has a stake in failed families and a motive to step in and declare failure when given the opportunity. As Gallagher points out, this is precisely what

divorce courts do: “No-fault divorce gave judges, at the request of one-half of the couple, the right to decide when a marriage had irretrievably broken down.”

If marriage is not wholly private, involuntary divorce by its nature requires constant supervision over private life by state officials. Marriage creates a private household, which may or may not necessitate signing some legal documents. Divorce dissolves not only a marriage but the private household formed by it, usually over the objections of one spouse. It inevitably involves state functionaries—police and prisons—to enforce the post-marriage order. Otherwise, one spouse might continue to claim the protections and prerogatives of private life: the right to live in the common home, to possess common property, or to parent the common children. In the roughly 80 percent of divorces that are unilateral, state agents are empowered, without further explanation, to remove innocent people from their homes, confiscate their property, and take away their children. Unilateral divorce dissolves not only marriage but private life.

Politically, no-fault divorce did much more than allow families to self-destruct. It permitted the state to assume jurisdiction over the private lives of citizens who were minding their own business and turn otherwise lawful private behavior into crimes. This obviously carried consequences far beyond family policy. Previously, a citizen could only be incarcerated following conviction by a jury for violating a specific statute, passed with citizen input and after deliberation by elected legislators, that applied equally to all. Suddenly, a citizen could be arrested and jailed without trial for failing to live in conformity with an order, formulated in a matter of minutes from limited information by an unelected judge, that applied

to no one but himself and whose provisions might well be beyond his ability to obey. A divorce decree amounted to a personalized criminal code legislated *ad hoc* around each former spouse, subjecting him to arrest for doing what anyone else might lawfully do.

Unilateral divorce thus placed the family in a legal-political status precisely the opposite of the original purpose of marriage. Far from preserving a private sphere of life immune from state intervention, involuntary divorce opened private lives to unprecedented state control.

The logic reaches its conclusion in directives recently published by the American Law Institute (ALI). This influential legal practitioners’ group announced on its own authority that family law jurisdiction would henceforth encompass non-marital private arrangements such as cohabiting couples, both heterosexual and homosexual, and indeed all private homes.

Marriage defenders expressed outrage, but they misunderstood the implications. As they now argue with respect

breathhtaking irony, an “intimate relationship”—which officials reserved for themselves to define—became not a status off-limits to government scrutiny but the exact opposite, one that gives government an *entrée* to exert virtually unlimited supervision over personal life. The abolition of marriage led directly to the abolition of private life.

Compounding the irony, the factor that now invariably justifies state intervention into the private sphere is the very one that had previously required keeping the state out—children. As with same-sex marriage, by ignoring children a plausible case can be made that divorce harms no one beyond the couple. Introducing children changes the dynamic.

Prior to the divorce revolution, authority over children had long been recognized to reside with their parents, absent some infraction. “For centuries it has been a canon of law that parents speak for their minor children,” wrote Justice Potter Stewart. “So deeply embedded in our traditions is this principle ... that the Constitution itself may

POLITICALLY, NO-FAULT DIVORCE DID MUCH MORE THAN **ALLOW FAMILIES TO SELF-DESTRUCT**. IT PERMITTED THE **STATE TO ASSUME JURISDICTION** OVER THE **PRIVATE LIVES OF CITIZENS** WHO WERE MINDING THEIR OWN BUSINESS AND TURN OTHERWISE **LAWFUL PRIVATE BEHAVIOR INTO CRIMES**.

to same-sex marriage, traditionalists charged that ALI was undermining marriage by blurring the distinction between legitimate marriage and cohabitation. But ALI was doing much more than this. Family-law practitioners were using the toehold they had established in married households through divorce law to extend government jurisdiction into every household entailing an “intimate relationship,” married or not. With

compel a state to respect it.” This too has been not only abrogated but directly inverted by divorce law, which proceeds on the opposite principle. As one analysis observes, “The child’s best interest is perceived as being independent of the parents, and a court review is held to be necessary to protect the child’s interests.” Divorce allows one parent to surrender both parents’ decision-making rights to the state.

As many have observed of marriage itself, the introduction of children into marital politics brings pressures for gender differentiation. Traditionally, as Allan Carlson points out, governments set the terms of marriage less to provide rights than to impose burdens, and the ones Carlson enumerates all pertain to divorce: "alimony, child custody, and the division of property." Significantly, these burdens were not symmetrical; they all involved removing something from the man. But they were accepted because in return the man derived one vital protection from marriage: the right to have children recognized as his. This too has become a fiction.

Margaret Mead once observed that reinforcing the parent-child bond has always been more necessary for fathers than for mothers. Some modern conservatives insist that marriage serves foremost to control male promiscuity. If so, it does so as a product of its larger function: to protect the father-child bond and with it the intact family. This is evident today, as the weakening of marriage produces fatherless, not usually motherless, homes. This point is overlooked by today's traditionalists, who argue that marriage undergirds civilization, for it is the father's presence that signifies both the intact family and, by the same measure, the civil institution. Thomas Hobbes attributed to married fatherhood a central role in the shift from the state of nature to civil society. In nature, Hobbes argued, "the dominion is in the mother": "For in the condition of mere nature, where there are no matrimonial laws, it cannot be known who is the father, unless it be declared by the mother. And therefore the right of dominion over the child dependeth on her will and is consequently hers."

Only in civil society—where "matrimonial laws" do operate—is custody over children shared with the father.

A new tale of Iraq and Niger yellowcake uranium skullduggery

that is circulating within the intelligence community originates with a former CIA officer who claims that he was present at discussions relating to the forgery of the incriminating document. Over drinks one evening, two very senior retired CIA Directorate of Operations officers who served extensively in the Middle East and Africa decided that it would be entertaining to make George Tenet, then the Director of Central Intelligence and a man they despised, look bad. This was the post-9/11 world, and they decided that the best way to make Tenet appear ridiculous would be to create a document tying Iraq to a nuclear-weapons program. They were convinced that Tenet, in their eyes the ultimate political sycophant, would jump at the information uncritically to feather his own nest with the White House, which badly wanted to devise a *casus belli* against Iraq. They hoped that Tenet would be humiliated and would be forced to resign after it was subsequently determined that the document was a fake.

Forging the document was easy, using authentic copies of documents from the government of Niger as models. The document would only have to stand up to minimal scrutiny before it would be identified as a fake, or so it was thought. The problem was introducing the forgery into the intelligence system in a credible way. One of the forgers was a close friend of a neoconservative Washington think-tank scholar who in turn had a long-established relationship with the Italian military intelligence service, SISMI. The scholar, believed to have been on SISMI's payroll for many years, had access to place the false information. He also thought that the document might well serve his personal agenda to bring about a war against Iraq. He presented the document to the Italians, describing it as having come from his own sources in Africa, and the Italians in turn presented it to the CIA. Mission accomplished.

Unfortunately, the forgery was not transparent enough and the information was viewed as credible in some U.S. government circles that badly wanted to believe that Saddam Hussein was pursuing a nuclear device. This led to the statement in President Bush's State of the Union address accusing Saddam of seeking to buy the yellowcake uranium, which eventually became part of the justification for going to war against Iraq.



Law-enforcement officials are looking into an apparent leak of sensitive information

that has led the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to sever its connection to two employees before indictments are handed down in the Franklin affair. The FBI and a special prosecutor have been investigating the possible passage of Defense Department classified information to the government of Israel. The two employees, Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman, have denied any wrongdoing but are known to be at the heart of a long-term FBI inquiry into possible espionage. The firing is a dramatic turnabout for AIPAC, which had refused to punish the men and had insisted that they were innocent.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

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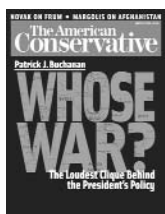
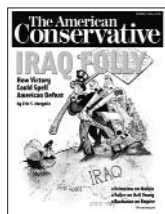
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Today, the different but interchangeable labels used for similar family-promotion schemes in the last two administrations implicitly recognize that fatherhood (Clinton) and marriage (Bush) are inseparable.

Traditionally, it has been marriage, not sperm, that determines the father. This was the purpose behind Lord Mansfield's law stipulating that a child born within wedlock is presumed to be that of the husband. It enabled a marriage to survive the wife's adultery. Here too, no-fault divorce has inverted the effect. By supporting what is now known as paternity fraud, Lord Mansfield's law has been transformed into an incentive to dissolve rather than preserve families. By filing for divorce, the adulterous wife, perhaps in collusion with the biological father, can now collect child support from the cuckolded husband for the children produced by the adultery.

Overwhelmingly, therefore, when children are involved, the spouse on whom government power will be brought to bear and who will experience the divorce regime's growing capacity to criminalize the involuntarily divorced is the father. Some believe this is logical, and it would be appropriate if, as popularly believed, the father is the one dissolving the family. In fact, the divorcing parent today is almost invariably the mother.

The failure of policymakers to confront this has further criminalized private life through a panoply of repressive measures against primarily (though not exclusively) fathers. "The advocates of ever-more-aggressive measures for collecting child support," writes Christensen, "have moved us a dangerous step closer to a police state." Devised as part of the welfare system to compel payments by unmarried fathers, penal measures pertaining to child support, domestic violence, and child abuse have now spread to the middle class through

divorce. Justified to protect and provide for women and children once the father is gone, they have mushroomed into an elaborate machinery that serves to remove fathers and subsidize fatherless homes.

Contrary to two decades of judicial and feminist propaganda, no scientific data indicate that fathers are, *en masse*, abandoning their families, beating their wives, and molesting their children. On the contrary, the evidence unambiguously establishes that a married household is the least likely setting for these problems.

The family crisis widely accepted on the Right as well as the Left is an optical illusion. What is advertised as an epidemic of dissolute fathers increasingly reveals itself as a power grab by a new class of political operatives who created no-fault divorce and who share an interest in displacing fathers and politicizing children. What makes it diabolically successful is a capacity to silence opposition and co-opt critics by claiming concern for children and distributing largesse ostensibly for their benefit. Thus camouflaged, the champions of other people's children make an end-run around more visible clashes over homosexuality, pornography, abortion, and schooling. But the bottom line remains: never before have governments created a bureaucratic apparatus whose primary purpose is to separate children from their parents.

The family crisis represents a microcosm of the larger crisis of modern politics, for it is driven by a class of political professionals whose livelihoods depend on politicizing everything, including now the most intimate corners of our lives. The government-occupied family is only the beginning of the brave new world we have created. ■

Stephen Baskerville is a professor at Howard University.

Andrea Dworkin: Culture Warrior?

The late feminist knew that debasing sex would lead to debauched values.

By Anthony Gancarski

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the passing of controversial feminist theorist Andrea Dworkin. From the Left and from the Right, her legacy has been shredded by critics who waited out Dworkin's prolonged illness to drive their sharpened axes into the neck of her corpse. A writer for the online leftist clearinghouse Salon.com provides an example, posthumously chiding Dworkin for waspishly asking an interviewer whether the infamous Lewinsky/Clinton shared cigar was lit. The visual, apparently, was too much to bear.

To the Salon writer, Dworkin's tendency toward "ghoulishly creative melodramatic flourish" signaled her inability "to enter into a conversation about morality unless the stakes were escalated to the stratosphere," and emblematic of a feminism that many, including the Salon scribe, found intolerable. Dworkin swung for the fences, according to some of her putative allies turned critics, when she should have been focusing on the "common troubles of women" as a writer. Such words come easy to moneyed folks on the Left, who choose easy condescension over active engagement. But Dworkin knew perfectly well of the common troubles of women, as well as the troubles of common women.

Andrea Dworkin, the writer, functioned as a heavyweight pugilist. Not the graceful ring general Muhammad Ali or the sullenly driven Sonny Liston, though, but the legendary club fighter Chuck "The Bayonne Bleeder" Wepner, a former sparring partner of Joe Frazier's who overcame humble beginnings to achieve

a particular sort of fame. Dworkin wrote like Wepner fought, resigned to take a beating but looking to land that one shot that would catapult her from obscurity to notoriety. Just as Wepner put the aforementioned Ali on his keister for one shining moment in a 15-round 1975 fight, his fellow Jerseyite labored time and again against impossible odds. She lost as much as she won, but how else could it be? She was just a poor, homely girl from New Jersey, who had little more than a weathered copy of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* on her person as she took her first baby steps toward national prominence.

Certainly, she knew that she'd have to take great risks to get noticed, and the influence of that fatalistic knowledge on her craft cannot be overstated: her writing style, like that of few of her peers, was calculated to provoke, as if she felt that doing what other writers wouldn't was her ticket into the intellectual debate. Death finds her influence on the wane, her historical moment passed, and perhaps this is because Andrea Dworkin as writer necessarily was herself a literary creation. She forged a persona that put to record some of the most vitriolic things about male-female relations and the sanctity of marriage imaginable, yet she herself was married. She embraced a dualism of ideas and expression, and it is that very bifurcation that informed her work, imbuing it with its considerable strengths and its oft-criticized slapdashery.

The very first sentence of Dworkin's autobiography encapsulates this signature ambivalence: "I come from

Camden, New Jersey, a cold, hard, corrupt city, and—now having been plundered by politicians, some of whom are in jail—also destitute. I remember being happy there." The language imbued with the sharp realism of old-school film noir, Dworkin establishes an impressive authority that allows her not to document her life in this book so much as reinvent it. At times within the same text, she fashions herself as a feminist Nietzschean superman [superwoman?]:

I am not an exhibitionist. I don't show myself. I am not asking forgiveness. I don't want to confess. But I have used everything I know—my life—to show what I believe must be shown so that it can be faced. The imperative at the heart of my writing—what must be done—comes directly from my life. But I do not show my life directly, in full view; nor even look at it while others watch.

The wall between literary persona and actual person inside is by necessity semi-permeable, but what is clear is that Dworkin understood that she was, at heart, a controversialist. She had to be—she came from nowhere and ended up in the first rank of American intellectuals with an ability to polarize and engage that many with greater innate advantage would spend their lives envying.

Perhaps her consciousness of outperforming the modest circumstances of her birth explains Dworkin's preference for sweeping, archetypal arguments to nuts-and-bolts discussions of "women's

issues.” Whether that is true or not, she was literally a larger-than-life figure. Rush Limbaugh, a man of the Right who took the occasion of Dworkin’s passing to savage her, had some interesting things to say on the radio—things that owed a little to the outsized rhetoric that Dworkin used to great effect. Telling was his insistence upon opening his remarks with an insult: “Now, I hate to mention this, folks, but you want to know who she was. She was about 400 pounds and when she went out to eat she had to take up two chairs and two tables, and they published a picture. That’s the only reason I know it. They published a picture of her eating somewhere at a restaurant before her lecture, and ... if there ever was a stereotype of a feminist, she made it come to life.”

As they say in hip-hop circles, game recognize game. Limbaugh’s critics have defined him by his perceived excesses, and so it is fitting that Limbaugh uses the same tactics in bidding adieu. But it clearly is Dworkin’s legacy Limbaugh buries here, his patented polemical flourishes notwithstanding.

To be fair, Dworkin has had her defenders: *National Review*’s Rick Brookhiser lauded Dworkin for her “unrelenting, hard, clear, and compelling” writing. Ellen Goodman dubbed her the “eloquent feminist,” and Gloria Steinem lauded her as one “of a handful of writers who helped change the world.” But did she really change the world? Did her ideas have much currency in the long run, beyond providing poison memes? It seems reflexively assumed, *ex hypothesi*, that somehow she did effect lasting change. But where is the evidence?

As is the fashion when someone dies, a handful of Dworkin’s quotes have found their way into general circulation, mostly to establish the extremities of her worldview. Many of these quotes are indefensible without drinking the Kool-Aid of the feminist movement. A sample

consciousness-raiser: “By the time we are women, fear is as familiar to us as air; it is our element. We live in it, we inhale it, we exhale it, and most of the time we do not even notice it.” Her rhetorical style in certain matters is clear: wax about the element of fear for a bit, then let loose with some volley like “Marriage is an institution developed from rape as a practice.” No mistaking that for Phyllis Schlafly.

Dworkin was conscious of how she was perceived, to the point that her personal website has a section called the “Lie Detector,” a page dedicated to debunking urban legends about things she said. There are some who believe that Dworkin was antisex, for example, and the page rebuts that assertion with pith: “Her early fiction is especially rich with narration about both lesbian and heterosexual lovemaking.” Likewise, for those who might have thought that Dworkin believed “all intercourse is rape,” Dworkin had a response:

If one’s sexual experience has always and without exception been based on dominance—not only overt acts but also metaphysical and ontological assumptions—how can one read this book? The end of male dominance would mean—in the understanding of such a man—the end of sex. If one has eroticized a differential in power that allows for force as a natural and inevitable part of intercourse, how could one understand that this book does not say that all men are rapists or that all intercourse is rape?

Who can argue with that? More to the point, who can diagram those sentences?

In spite of Dworkin’s undeniable stridency, the depiction of her as a “feminazi” that Limbaugh and others put forth is necessarily myopic. Her man-hating didn’t extend to her own father, a man of the Left: “It would be hard to overstate

how much he taught me about human rights and human dignity, how to talk and how to think.” Perhaps it is because her relationship with her father was so strong that she understood family values, in some sense, as clearly as any cultural conservative.

Despite being an extreme leftist, she saw pornography and sexual licentiousness as what they were: fake solutions to real problems, roads to perdition. Dworkin, for all her considerable faults, understood that the debasing of sex would lead to debauched values and, eventually, the erosion of both the nuclear family and the culture itself. Dworkin rejected the idea that sex was a commodity, to be bartered like any other. Despite all her bluster, Dworkin at her core was a utopian, who must have believed that better things were possible if people could check their worst impulses. So it was that she raged against men for objectifying women, and—more importantly—against women for permitting themselves to be objectified. Her position was not a popular one and at this point is a historical footnote. The unyielding tide of events—a society that has embraced autoeroticism like a 21st-century Baal—appears to indicate that Dworkin’s prophecies have been found wanting by her putative flock. Dworkin lies dead and her ideology right beside her—or so it would seem.

But in some sense, Dworkin was right. Our culture has embraced pornography and unbridled license for decades, and what have we gotten? Preteen girls wearing Chinese-made thongs, maxed out credit cards, and ads for sex drive boosters at every sporting event. Dworkin was *sui generis*; no sane person could agree with everything she wrote. But that doesn’t mean she didn’t make, once and again, a valid point. ■

Anthony Gancarski writes from Jacksonville, Fla.

Social Security Shell Game

Creating a solvable crisis obscures deeper ills.

By Paul W. Schroeder

BRUCE BARTLETT of the National Center for Policy Analysis reacted to the annual report of the Social Security and Medicare Board of Trustees by asking, “Why are we talking about saving Social Security?”

The question might seem odd, for, as the three Bush cabinet members on the board loyally emphasized, the report did see Social Security in trouble over the long term. But two independent trustees, one a Republican and a supporter of Bush’s ideas on Social Security, pointed out its main message, ignored by the cabinet members: Medicare is in far worse trouble than Social Security, headed on a much steeper trajectory towards fiscal exhaustion decades earlier.

The report’s figures were already common knowledge. A March 2 AP story reported a projected Medicare funding shortage seven times higher than Social Security’s, and growing much more rapidly; Medicare’s expenditures exceeded its tax receipts in 2004, Social Security’s do so only in 2017; the projected dates of exhaustion of Medicare hospital funds and Social Security funds respectively are 2019 and 2042; Social Security’s costs in projected percentage of GDP will level off after 2030 at 6.4 percent, while Medicare’s will continue rising to 13.7 percent, approaching the entire tax revenue of the federal government.

This article is not intended to answer “Why Social Security now, rather than Medicare or other concerns?” or to advise what should be done. Those questions are being raised and discussed, with answers being offered by

both sides. I will argue that though one side’s case makes more surface sense than the other’s, neither answer is satisfactory. I want to suggest a deeper interpretation—to ask what it means when a particular regime or country, faced with multiple growing problems of varying magnitude, danger, and immediacy, chooses to concentrate on a lesser and more remote threat rather than greater and more immediate ones and what is at stake when it does so.

But first the current explanations. The answer of administration supporters is straightforward and candid: Social Security’s problems are easier to solve. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), who heads the administration’s Social Security reform campaign in the Senate, concedes that Medicare’s woes are much worse than Social Security’s but insists, “I don’t think anybody has a good idea how to resolve” its problems and so advises, “Let’s solve the one we can solve.”

Alan Greenspan endorses this rationale. Telling a House committee that the Medicare problem is “several times more difficult than is Social Security,” he nonetheless advised Congress against tackling Medicare until advances in medical information technology allow the system to save money by increasing the health sector’s efficiency. To act now, he warned, would risk “restructuring an obsolete model.”

Greenspan’s advice on Medicare smacks of Micawberism—“something will turn up”—as well as a strange hope that in this case the devil will drive out Beelzebub. Greenspan knows that the

most powerful engine driving up the costs of medical care is scientific and technological advance, both by extending lifespans and by developing new, usually sophisticated and expensive, techniques. On what rational basis can one expect that this process that hitherto has driven medical costs up, supported by powerful groups profiting from it, will somehow make costs go down? Even if the president succeeds in selling his Social Security changes to the public, why should people persuaded with difficulty to accept future losses and risks in one popular program be ready to accept even more drastic changes and losses in another program just as important to their welfare?

Bush’s opponents on the Left claim that his goal is not to save Social Security but to destroy it. Private accounts and reductions in entitlements are just the first step in a Republican plan to starve and eventually phase out Social Security. But as the real answer to “Why Social Security now?” this explanation is not convincing. It would mean either that Bush is here being manipulated by others with deeper and more devious minds or that he is bent on ultimately destroying the New Deal. Neither assumption has much evidence to support it. It is far less likely that Bush is being manipulated by supposedly cleverer persons than that he is being encouraged in his *idées fixes* by sycophants. One cannot ignore an element of genuine conviction on his part that he is working for the general good and that his proposals really are the way to save Social Security.

A variant of this explanation sees the hidden agenda behind the Social Security campaign as electoral politics more than social policy—another cunning maneuver by Karl Rove to weaken the Democratic voter base by converting young voters into stock-market-watching Republicans. This fits some evidence, including Bush's touting of the "ownership society," but it too has problems. The Social Security campaign has put Bush's reputation for political invincibility at risk, strained his base's loyalty and his party's discipline, alienated a vital portion of the electorate, and galvanized a demoralized opposition party into united resistance. Even granting Bush's penchant for bold ventures to prove his critics wrong and carve a place in history, explaining a high-risk political move by an uncertain hope of achieving a hypothetical long-term gain seems implausible.

Why would the Bush administration, normally shrewd in electoral politics, brave public skepticism by targeting Social Security, among all major federal programs the one soundest fiscally and enjoying the strongest support politically, for reform, while ignoring more immediate and critical problems?

Another quite different explanation is possible and, once raised, almost obvious. Though by nature more speculative and harder to back with concrete evidence, it is intuitively persuasive and rests on one of the most solidly grounded principles in political psychology. Moreover, it helps explain both this decision and a wide pattern of Bush administration actions.

Most political organizations, even more than individuals, are—to use social science jargon—satisficers rather than maximizers, bent more on reaching and maintaining a desirable position than on winning everything. This makes them risk-averse not in the sense that they refuse to gamble at all, but they will

typically gamble more to avert possible great dangers and avoid unacceptable losses than to achieve possible great gains. This principle suggests that the main answer to "Why Social Security now?" lies not in the declared or hidden goals of the Bush administration and the calculated risks it will accept to reach them but in the unacceptable risks and losses it wants to avert.

The 2004 elections, in which the Bush administration and the Republican Party won a narrow but solid electoral victory, left them with unprecedented power and serious challenges. The margin of victory was relatively thin and poten-

tially reversible, and the public remained nervous about the general direction the country was taking in foreign affairs, especially the war and occupation in Iraq. Worse still were the domestic structural problems already emerging in Bush's first term—not only concrete ones like Medicare and Medicaid, budget, trade, and current-account deficits, but also broader ones, not crucial now but persistent and worrisome: a growing gap between the very rich and the poor and middle class, nagging unemployment, the relative decline in American manufacturing and world competitiveness, the sense that despite a current economic recovery America was not maintaining its former economic leadership in the world or stable prosperity at home.

REPEATEDLY BUSH HAS LAUNCHED **APPARENTLY BOLD INITIATIVES** TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS THAT WERE **EASY TO SOLVE**, WHILE **HARDER TASKS WERE IGNORED**.

These concrete structural problems and other sources of unease could not indefinitely be met or masked simply by optimistic assurances or appeals to patriotism. Despite their victory, or precisely because of it, Republicans had to do something bold to turn the country

around, or at least to create the impression that they were. Yet the ideology, principles, and measures that had brought them to power made any direct attack on these problems unthinkable. All the ideas and actions that principled conservatives would in the past have urged to meet both the structural problems and the broader malaise—serious cuts in government spending, a balanced budget, an aversion to utopian projects abroad—were now ruled out by the administration's past actions, by current Republican shibboleths, and by the demands of their supporters. It would have been impossible for this president

and party to curb massive spending increases for defense, homeland security, and debt service, or launch any serious government management of trade, immigration, or globalization. A serious approach to the Medicare and other crises was thus as unthinkable for Bush in early 2005 as an offensive against Germany was for Chamberlain and Daladier in early 1940. The answer: to propose reform for something important and symbolic that did not need immediate fixing, to concentrate public attention on a supposed crisis in Social Security—possibly unreal, certainly remote—for which a superficially plausible remedy was available, thereby distracting from other real, immediate crises and avoiding the greater risks.

Repeatedly, Bush has proposed and launched apparently bold initiatives to deal directly with problems that were relatively distant or easy to solve, while harder tasks were ignored or obscured. The Iraq War, predictably easy to win militarily, substituted for winning a much harder contest against terrorism.

Demanding Palestinian reform and the cessation of violence as a precondition for American involvement in the peace process was, at least in domestic politics, a virtually costless substitute for the risky task of pressuring Israel to hold to the road map and freeze new settlements. Eliminating a nuclear threat from Iraq, ultimately proved nonexistent, became a device for doing nothing about a proven nuclear threat from North Korea. Even today, the emphasis on the supposed threat from Iranian nuclear weapons programs distracts attention from the main sources of nuclear weapons, materials, and technology, the former Soviet Union and Pakistan. Spending billions on a missile defense system against a threat most see as remote distracts from the failure to defend ports and coasts against much more likely threats, harder to identify and combat, from near-coastal range. Fighting for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge substitutes for the absence of a serious energy policy. The list goes on.

This sounds like a denunciation of Bush's policies as unusually cynical. It is not. All governments do this to a greater or lesser extent—that is, gain and retain power, win popularity, hold and recruit supporters, and win elections by avoiding difficult decisions and painful sacrifices, refusing to take major risks, distracting public attention, and letting future generations solve problems. This is not admirable, often not defensible, but it is not always or entirely a bad thing—nor are better policies always available.

A sensible view of politics recognizes that at times the best policy is to let sleeping dogs lie, and if they are aroused and snarling to try to get them to lie down again. A government may simply be too weak and unstable to attack real problems or believe that the time is not ripe for doing so or conclude that the cost of the

solution would be greater than inaction.

Historical illustrations abound. The Habsburg monarchy survived many crises over many centuries partly by recognizing that it could never solve its essential problems, but only manage and survive them, because an attempt at a thoroughgoing solution would tear the monarchy apart. The only possible recourse much of the time was to muddle through (or, in Austro-German, *fortwursteln*—"sausage on.")

Nor am I arguing that the Bush administration is worse than most previous administrations in ignoring problems and evading responsibilities or that a Democratic administration would be much better. Both propositions may be true, but they are not the main point and debating them distracts from it.

After granting all the possible concessions—that sometimes muddling through and ignoring problems is not the worst policy, that even doing so by a diversionary tactic that poses as bold and resolute is not extraordinarily hypocritical, that most states, including the United States, have done this and often got away with it for a time—the bottom line remains that this is never a good policy. Usually it makes things worse; sometimes it renders the problems insoluble; occasionally, persisted in long enough, it produces disaster. There can come a time when not only have the neglected problems become too severe and deep-rooted to be solved, but worse, the practice of devious risk avoidance has become so institutionalized that a political system becomes dysfunctional, able only to exacerbate problems rather than meet them. Some such process was involved in causing most of the great wars and all the great revolutions of modern European history since 1500, perhaps the clearest example being the decades leading up to the French Revolution of 1789.

The U.S. is still far from this end but is headed unmistakably toward it. What

makes the move in that direction so maddening is that on the one hand it is so unnecessary—the United States still has ample time, resources, energy, and political will to face its problems squarely—and on the other that it is so politically effective. However Bush's Social Security campaign finally turns out legislatively, it has already succeeded as a diversionary tactic.

Many have commented on the growing danger of breakdown or paralysis in the American political process and traced it to various causes—bitter partisan warfare, ruthless all-out politics, a loss of consensus and national purpose, a deep cultural divide in the nation. None have seen the deepest cause for worry: the unnecessary resort, even in relatively good times while the problems of the country are still soluble or manageable, to this dangerous practice of diversionary risk avoidance.

It reminds one of Jesus's words, "If they do this in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?" The end point, still a good ways off, will come when every sensible person acknowledges that the country's main problems are too serious to be dodged any longer and that something radical must be done. Most may even agree on what the problems and remedies are, but they will know that no one—leader, party, administration, Congress—will actually do anything because serious measures would demand too much sacrifice from powerful groups and interests, and proposing serious remedies would mean political suicide.

That kind of breakdown is not an immediate danger, but it has happened often in history and could happen here. Meanwhile America's current, genuinely urgent problems are getting worse. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[*The Interpreter*]

Lost in Translation

By Steve Sailer

"THE INTERPRETER," starring Sean Penn as a Secret Service agent charged with protecting a Robert Mugabe-style African dictator visiting the United Nations and Nicole Kidman as a translator who overhears a plot to assassinate the kleptocrat, received a rather warm welcome from critics and opening weekend audiences because 2005 has been so lacking in Hollywood movies for grown-ups. One suspenseful set piece tracking a terrorist on a Brooklyn bus temporarily justifies the movie's thudding, screeching score, but overall this portentous, inane, and interminable film gives maturity a bad name.

Directors seldom ripen with age, and the septuagenarian Sydney Pollack, maker of "Three Days of the Condor" and "Out of Africa," is no exception. We like to imagine that directors are artists with profound insights into the human predicament, but they more resemble battlefield commanders relying upon the charismatic confidence and sleepless energy of the prime of life, not the wisdom of age, to make countless quick decisions.

Imagine that after months wheedling permission to be the first to film inside the UN, it's the day to shoot the crucial encounter between Penn, so florid and furrowed, and Kidman, so pale and smooth. But your leading lady shows up

with a pimple, and all that your make-up artists can do is powder it down to a not-quite-subliminal blemish on her otherwise flawless complexion.

So do you call Kofi Annan and beg to be allowed back in a week when Nicole's lip has healed? Or do you throw out your planned close-ups? Or maybe you could backlight her? Your 120 or so highly paid crew members are looking to you for decisions.

Pollack, though, just tiredly plows ahead, making uninspired choices that fail to encourage suspension of disbelief in the frequently ludicrous plot.

Many critics have praised "The Interpreter" for shooting at the UN, but you'd have to possess, like Pollack and his squadron of screenwriters, a quasi-religious reverence for that trade association for heads of government (some of them gangsters like Mugabe) to see anything uplifting in the UN's soul-sapping International Style modern architecture. Inspired primarily by Le Corbusier, the muse of the public-housing project, the UN's 38-story skyscraper reflects a time when trendy architects assumed that the Pantheon, Chartres Cathedral, and the Taj Mahal were all just crude random gropings toward humanity's ultimate style: the metal and glass box.

Similarly, "The Interpreter's" politics are an only modestly disillusioned updating of the Kumbaya era when liberals fantasized that the UN would lead decolonized Africa in offering moral guidance to the West.

"The Interpreter's" big plot twist is that Kidman, the palest of Hollywood's innumerable blondes, turns out to have grown up in fictional "Matobo" (in reality, a national park in Zimbabwe). Is she a femme fatale plotting revenge on the Mugabe-figure because he took her country away from her settler family?

Heavens, no! She remains the sappiest true believer in multiculturalism, even though the liberator-turned-tyrant blew up her parents.

And it's just as well that the script portrays the heroine as a naïve nincompoop, because Kidman, although built on the elongated chassis of the classic femme fatale, is too bland for a dark role. She's the kind of obvious arm candy—very slender, very fair—that an extremely rich man might marry to quiet questions about his sexual orientation, yet her resemblance to a 12-year-old girl means she lacks the bewitching beauty of womanhood.

Still, this gullible progressive might have shed sparks with Sean Penn's character if he had been written as an Irish-American NYPD detective at first disbelieving and then contemptuous of how Kidman's people gave up their colony and merely hoped for justice from those they had once ruled—in contrast to how New York's Catholic ethnics have held on to the police department and, especially, the heroic fire department.

Unfortunately, Penn is supposed to be a Secret Service agent, yet despite his enormous reputation as an actor, he makes little effort to imitate their famously neutral professional affect. He's just a humorless bore until he finally earns his pay by scrunching up his legendarily mobile features and boo-hooing.

Penn is to tragedy what Jim Carrey is to comedy: the man with the most gymnastic facial muscles. Unfortunately for Penn, actors who have succeeded at playing tragic heroes, such as Laurence Olivier and James Earl Jones, have traditionally been imposing figures whose downfall is cathartic. Penn, sadly, is a wrinkly little rodent of a fellow. ■

BOOKS

[*The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, Andrew J. Bacevich, Oxford University Press, 270 pages]

The Lure of Military Society

By Richard K. Betts

"MILITARISM" WILL SOUND harsh to many, hysterical to some, but this superb screed makes a depressingly good case. It is not just another shrill polemic, although it is a polemic in the best sense of the word. Eloquent, wry, sober, deftly cutting, with undertones of anger, sadness, and hope, Bacevich writes like Paul Fussell with a political sensibility. Whatever exaggeration of the problem there may be is just the right amount to drive the point home.

For a serious university press book it is also quite a page-turner. Fans of *The American Conservative's* stance on foreign policy will find themselves nodding and murmuring, "Yes, YES!" as they move through it. For them the experience will recall Orwell's line that the best kind of book is one that tells you something you already knew. Will it be taken seriously, however, or will it even be read, by those who need to be hit between the eyes—the Clintonites, Bushmen, and garden-variety conservatives and liberals who provide the barely questioned consensus on military activism that the book attacks?

Fortunately the answer may be yes. One big reason this book could have the impact it deserves is the author's credentials. He is not only a political conservative but a genuine soldier-scholar: 23 years an Army officer, Princeton Ph.D., Boston University professor, author of several other insightful books from specialized studies of military organization like *The Pentomic Era* to

sweeping critiques such as his recent *American Empire*. If written by someone like me (a Democrat whose abbreviated service never took him farther than Fort Benning, Georgia), *The New American Militarism* would drop like a stone, dismissed as expectable academic leftism or reactionary *realpolitik*. On this charged topic, few will brush off Bacevich's authority.

"Today as never before in their history," the book relentlessly argues, "Americans are enthralled with military power." They naïvely exaggerate its effectiveness, overlook its horror, romanticize the military profession, and accept the normalization of war as an instrument of policy. There is no single culprit in this shift, certainly not just the Bush administration and its neocons, although they get their fair share of blame. The march to militarism has been a bipartisan project into which various elites, popular culture, and religious movements have shepherded society and government institutions with scarcely a thought.

To a degree unprecedented but now taken for granted, the purpose of the armed forces has shifted from defending American territory to projecting power abroad. Clear superiority over potential enemies is assumed to be insufficient; only worldwide supremacy is deemed adequate. (Bacevich might have added that only in America would we see a difference between national security—the business of the Defense Department, carried on far from our shores—and homeland security, requiring another new department to protect the country itself.)

In popular consciousness, the 20th-century image of war as "barbarism, brutality, ugliness," which "after 1914, only fascists dared to challenge," the image of the modern battlefield as a slaughterhouse, has been replaced by a 21st-century high-tech image of war as clean—"surgical, frictionless, postmodern"—in which the heroes of the hit film "Top Gun" "never missed a meal and got sweaty only when they felt like it." Among the laments that one suspects

hits close to home for Bacevich is the fact that since "the demise of the ancient American tradition of the citizen-soldier," war is no longer "participatory." With military service having come to be a matter of personal choice rather than obligation, an attitude exemplified in the personal histories of Dick Cheney and Bill Clinton, Americans experience war only "vicariously."

The analysis behind all this proves solidly, sadly convincing. I find little with which to quarrel and only a bit over which to quibble—and the quibbles supplement the book's argument more than challenge it.

One big question that Bacevich answers very well but incompletely is where this militarist shift came from. His chapters chronicle the confluence of social, political, and intellectual developments driving toward the embrace of force, tracing the evolution of domestic politics and popular culture, national-security strategy from the Cold War to Sept. 11, oil addiction and entanglement in the Persian Gulf, the crisis-mongering and Churchill mania of the neocons, the migration of evangelicals from anti-political pacifism to worldly crusades, the failure of the military officer corps to secure the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, the technological panaceas purveyed by defense intellectuals, and more.

Bacevich sees all this as a recent, dramatic change, a perversion of tradition driven indirectly by reaction to Vietnam and the turmoil of the 1960s. He does note that the new mentality has deeper roots, particularly in Wilsonianism. One might trace the origins back even farther, however, at least to the jingoism of 1898 and our first imperial adventure in the Philippines, if not to the vogue of Manifest Destiny. Today's myths that Bacevich finds so appalling have culminated and converged in the 21st century, but in many ways they are old myths. They come to the surface periodically and recede in the face of rude awakenings about the limits of what force can do to remake the world in our image.

In *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Louis Hartz framed this tendency as a

traditional oscillation in foreign policy: the classical liberal absolutism that underlies American exceptionalism drives Americans either to transform the world or withdraw from it. Consistent with this insight, Frank Klingberg's research in the 1950s traced a regular cycle of extroversion and introversion in U.S. policy. Americans often come to idealize the role of force for making the world right and then stand down not

powers, view force as a last resort, move to a strategy of defense and self-sufficiency, and revive the venerable concept of the citizen-soldier. But how do we make such sensible changes happen?

Consider the ideal of the citizen-soldier. Restoring the draft is out of the question. The problem is not just that there is no support for it in its old form. That form was not great either, since it was selective service, not universal. By the time of

into a unified movement since they disagree on everything but foreign policy.

What might turn the minority coalition favoring restraint into a majority? Of course we have to try, but the odds are low that debate and logic will do it. Two developments would. One is simple failure in a costly adventure against a third-rate opponent. The other is the rise of another superpower to impose constraint.

The disaster in Iraq has a long way to go before it threatens to rival the experience of Vietnam, and while unhappy about the war, Americans remain permissive—not just because of the honorable principle that if we broke it we have to fix it but because Bush successfully conflated counterinsurgency in Iraq with the global War on Terror. A debacle in Iraq might force retrenchment as after Vietnam, but remember how remarkably short that retrenchment of the 1970s was. Moreover, Bacevich reminds us that it was reaction to that debacle that fueled the resurgence of feistiness and global ambition in the Reagan era. As for a new bipolarity, there is also a long way to go before we may get to that alternative, whether it comes in the form of a genuinely unified and anti-American Europe or a full-grown China.

Neither of these developments is something that Americans could want in good conscience. As frustrating, exasperating, and tragically unnecessary in its costs as the current hubris is, today's misguided policy reflects a degree of peace and security preferable to the Cold War. If my pessimism is valid, we may be doomed to live with a problem that is bad but manageable. Let's hope, however, that Bacevich's more optimistic view of the potential for change is more accurate. If we could get a president and Congress who would read his book and take it to heart, we would be a long way toward recovery. ■

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OVER THE FULL SPAN OF U.S. HISTORY, HAVING HUGE ARMED FORCES HAS BEEN AN EPISODIC, DECIDEDLY TEMPORARY EVENT, BUT FOR TODAY'S AMERICANS UNDER THE AGE OF 70 THIS SITUATION IS ALL THEY HAVE EVER KNOWN.

when we succeed—as in the Cold War—but when elective adventures give us a bloody nose.

What is new is less the militarist myths than the lack of counterweights to hold them in check. Americans became accustomed to permanent mobilization in the course of half a century of war, hot and cold, against fascism and communism. Over the full span of U.S. history, having huge armed forces has been an episodic, decidedly temporary event, but for today's Americans under the age of 70 this situation is all they have ever known. During the Cold War, this massive power was kept in bounds by the counter-power of the Soviet Union. Although bloody sparring in Korea and Vietnam was thought to be the price of avoiding the defeat of the West by salami tactics, it was simply not an option to do for Hungary or Czechoslovakia what Bush the Younger did for Iraq. In the world before the 21st century, Americans had to remain sober and restrained because the costs of indulging the romantic view of war were obvious.

In the unipolar world there is no longer anything to hold the United States in check but our own good sense. How can we get back from militarist myths to prudence? Bacevich has laudable prescriptions, for example to heed the founders, revitalize the separation of

Vietnam, most of the children of the elite—those who lead opinion and make policy—were escaping conscription. (Ask all the chickenhawks who rose to prominence in the last two administrations.) And political reality today means that any draft would have to include women. Try selling that to American voters. Bacevich is a realist and recognizes that a draft is not in the cards, but he hopes that incentives like a souped-up G.I. bill will induce more of a cross-section of society to enlist. Or he wants to reconnect the officer corps to society by abolishing the military academies as four-year programs and turning them into short finishing schools for ROTC graduates. Try selling that to the U.S. Congress. The goals are good, but the means to get to them seem like weak reeds.

What about reorienting strategy to defense rather than intervention? That switch requires overcoming a strong permissive consensus, precisely the popular attitude that Bacevich shows so well is the problem. There are challenges to this consensus, but they are an odd assortment of minorities from across the political spectrum: libertarian conservatives of the Cato Institute, communitarian conservatives, leftists like Ralph Nader, protesters against globalization, and a few cranky academic realists (like me). This motley crew is small, and it is hard to imagine welding them

[*China, Inc.: How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World*, Ted C. Fishman, Scribner, 342 pages]

Mr. Hamilton Goes to China

By James Gass

"WE HAVE NEVER valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures." So wrote Emperor Qianlong of China to King George III of Great Britain in 1793. Two years earlier, Alexander Hamilton had used his *Report on Manufactures* to lay down the foundations of American economic independence. Ted C. Fishman's new book, *China, Inc.*, shows us that China is competing with the U.S. to be the world's foremost empire and is doing it in ways that both Hamilton and Qianlong trusted.

China, Inc. chronicles the results of China's 25-year-long economic boom, and its manufacturing and export-driven economy has been a spectacular success. Fishman's volume does not so much make arguments about trade policies as rely on the sheer magnitude of the country and its competitive advantages to alarm us. China's 1.3 billion people constitute 22 percent of the world's population; its workforce averages 40 cents an hour; and its universities produce 325,000 engineers annually, five times as many as the United States. Further, the new "China price" sets the floor for labor costs at a level often four times lower than Mexico's. *China, Inc.*'s mass of disquieting statistics captures a country that is striving for economic supremacy.

The author says that China's growth has no modern equal, the size of its economy is hidden, and it is winning the contest for investment capital. To disciples of globalism, this book reveals that international free-trade policies have made the world one. For heretics, though, the utility of Fishman's narrative is that it demonstrates clearly that

"China, Inc." will not be deterred by regulations from the same econocrats who try to make Americans into rickshaw drivers for the WTO.

Fishman enlightens us about China's dramatic economic upsurge and inadvertently shows us how nations become rich. To be sure, he is not the first to do so. In 1993, *The Atlantic's* James Fallows wrote a three-part series on world economics that foretold China's potent growth in the coming decade. While free-trade politicians and the *Wall Street Journal* kowtowed before NAFTA for *maquiladora* workers, Fallows used history to educate us about how Deng Xiaoping's China was conducting its economic ascent. Perhaps now, after a decade of racking up record-setting foreign-trade deficits, enormous federal debts, and Congress extending Most Favored Nation status to China, we may finally be willing to listen.

Yet as Western management experts and journalists such as Fishman are gravitating to China to study its mysterious growth, they seem to miss something elemental. The real source of that country's economic rise is not a secret—it's just plain old American-style protectionism. China has climbed from Mao's peasant agrarianism in precisely the same way that America flourished under

Wal-Mart were a nation," Fishman observes, "it would rank as China's fifth-largest export market, ahead of Germany and Great Britain." According to the Commerce Department, in 2004 trade imbalances with China were 30 percent of the U.S. trade deficit. Concurrently, China is also the world leader in attracting foreign investment. As Fishman reveals, the "big reason China is growing is that the world keeps feeding it capital."

Abraham Lincoln once remarked that the "abandonment of the protective policy by the American government must ... produce want and ruin among our people." He has been proven right. Since 2000, the U.S. has lost 2.9 million manufacturing jobs, and *China, Inc.* tells us plainly what most American economists dare not say about job creation: "if you build the factories, they will come." Instead, decades of free-trade policies have turned America's former industrial hubs, such as Detroit, Cleveland, Allentown, Bethlehem, and Pittsburgh, into Forbidden Cities for manufacturing.

Between 1978 and 2005, the Chinese GNP has grown at an aggressive rate of 9.5 percent, while the U.S. and Europe have managed only 2 or 3 percent. As were Great Britain and America in the

CHINA HAS CLIMBED FROM MAO'S PEASANT AGRARIANISM IN PRECISELY THE SAME WAY THAT AMERICA FLOURISHED UNDER OUR OWN HAMILTONIAN SYSTEM, THAT IS, THROUGH MANUFACTURING, TARIFFS, AND FOREIGN EXPORTS.

our own Hamiltonian system, that is, through manufacturing, tariffs, and foreign exports. Although unnoted in this book, 21st-century China's average tariff rate is a Hamiltonian 11 percent compared to free-trade America's Cordell Hullian 2 percent. China has overrun the U.S.'s domestic markets, while fiercely guarding its own turf.

In November 2004, the *China Business Weekly* reported that 70 percent of the inventory of the world's biggest retailer, Wal-Mart, is made in China. "If

19th and 20th centuries, China—now "the world's factory floor"—is snatching up natural resources for industrial output. "China, Inc." consumes 25 percent of the world's steel and is purchasing Saudi and Russian oil fields to obtain seven million barrels of oil a day. Even though China is already the world's biggest buyer of German and Japanese high-tech factory machinery, a recent BBC series indicated that at this point the country is only one-third of its way towards full industrialization.

Fishman confirms for us with figures what we all have suspected: China has "become the world's largest maker of consumer electronics, pumping out more TVs, DVD players, and cell phones than any other country." And it makes more than cheap gadgets. China has used its quick winnings in the light industries to position itself to launch into heavy manufacturing and high technology, including ships, trains, planes, submarines, biotech, semiconductors, rockets, and satellites. Fishman uses anecdotes about "farmer-entrepreneurs" and Special Economic Zones to highlight how free-market reforms have allowed the country to become an industrial sensation.

The official trade records do not take into consideration that, unlike the former Soviet Union, China's "Red Capitalists" tend to understate their nation's economic performance. They also ignore the lawlessness of its annual \$50 billion industry in counterfeit goods. Fishman reports that according to local government figures, the Chinese economy might be as much as 15 percent larger than documented. Moreover, financial experts claim that the Chinese currency, the yuan, is undervalued by almost half and, being pegged to the American dollar by huge currency reserves, gives China even greater bene-

fits in trade deals. By 2012, China will be the leading manufacturer in the world, and by 2050 it will also have the largest economy in the world, a projected 75 percent bigger than America's.

For centuries, Westerners have tried to penetrate Chinese markets. Today, however, China's output, U.S. free-trade policies, and our consumption have slammed the door on us. Now it is the Chinese who are exploiting our markets.

Still, according to the dogma of free trade, our national borders are irrelevant, our job losses are meaningless, our trade deficits are immaterial, and

ACCORDING TO THE **DOGMA OF FREE TRADE**, OUR **NATIONAL BORDERS** ARE IRRELEVANT, OUR **JOB LOSSES** ARE MEANINGLESS, OUR **TRADE DEFICITS** ARE IMMATERIAL.

our means of production must be relinquished to the revolutionary ideals of globalism. Since World War II, far too many U.S. policymakers have been perfectly content to purchase their short-term prosperity with the long-term financial stability of their nation. If octogenarian Chinese Communists can use Hamiltonian tariffs to protect their markets, perhaps the U.S. Congress could reform itself and start to do the same for us.

Despite emulating his economics, China has never shared our Hamilton's deep commitment to constitutionalism or good character in statecraft. No discussion of modern China should exclude mention of its brutally unrepentant Communist dictatorship. Though Chairman Mao's mass murders may have receded, the futuristic steel, glass, and orb-laden skylines of Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou that Fishman artfully describes cannot hide Communist China's true nature. *China, Inc.* allocates little space to China's slave labor, forced sterilizations for population control, or its imprisonment

of the religiously faithful. For instance, only three of 300 pages are devoted to the horrors of China's "war on baby girls" and one-child policy, while the vast majority of the book is dedicated to coldly analyzing global trade and economic statistics. In *China, Inc.*'s pages, as with America today, commerce trumps human rights. Even at the height of the Cold War, few consumer products in the U.S. bore the label "Made in the Soviet Union." China, however, is fueled by a dynamic economy that we finance.

The empire of China is the oldest realm on earth, and today its Communist state has been carefully grafted to the unrivaled economic principles of Alexander Hamilton. Ted Fishman's *China, Inc.* provides more proof for us that China's rise, like America's and Great Britain's before it, is driven by far-sighted economic nationalism. On the other hand, free-trade policies dismiss lawmakers from their constitutional duties while expediting national decline. True to its ancient wisdom, China has entrusted its economic future to these hard-won lessons of history. ■

James Gass writes from the Boston area.



"Remember son, when life hands you lemons, try,
try again because a penny saved gathers no moss.
That pretty much covers everything."

Fourth Estate Follies



Dear, oh dear! Nicholas Kristof, a *New York Times* columnist, laments, “the climate for freedom of the press in the United States feels more ominous

than it has for decades.” He urges vociferous protest and a federal shield law for journalists—this because two journalists have been ordered to jail for refusing a judge’s order to reveal their sources. Both hacks are free pending appeals.

Although I was in Albania for a short visit 25 years ago, I was unaware that freedom of the press was about to be curtailed in the Land of the Free. Kristof admits that judges do not decide cases on public sentiment but that their decisions do reflect the values of their society. (Now you’re talking, Nicholas, old boy.) Journalists, whether they know it or not, do come under a nation’s laws, and when they place themselves above them—as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and others of their ilk do—they must suffer the consequences.

Not that many of them have. In fact, only one hack from NBC got four months of house arrest for telling a judge to go and reproduce himself. They are a funny bunch these journalists. They’re arrogant, especially since Watergate, they’re untrustworthy, and they’re definitely out of touch. My favorite hysteric, Maureen Dowd, had kittens last week when the new pope was elected. She called him all sorts of names and brought up the Inquisition. Maureen baby, who was obviously traumatized when Gabby Hayes refused her advances (not to worry, sweetheart, there’s always Adolph Menjou) wants a modern and cool pope. The fact that a billion and more Catholics do not has not entered her Irish brain. Nor has it registered that busybodies who insult other peoples’ icons in order to appear sophisticated are loathed by most folks who still buy newspapers.

Mind you, I’m not saying that Ms. Dowd has no right to her opinions. She does and always will in this country. It is her outrage when others do not do it the Dowd way that bothers me. Talk about arrogance! Kristof reports that among 13 institutions the National Opinion Research Center investigated, all had retained a good measure of public respect except for the press.

Distrust is the order of the day, ergo the success of the blogs and of the Internet. As Rupert Murdoch, or the Dirty Digger as he’s known among us hacks in Blighty, said to the American Society of Newspaper Editors recently, “They don’t want to rely on a God-like figure from above to tell them what’s important.” Murdoch should know. He has done more to ruin what was once a respected estate by dumbing down to cartoon level all his newspapers, including the *London Times*, but that’s another story altogether.

The Dirty Digger is above all smart. He realizes that people like Dowd and Rather and the rest of the holier-than-thou buffoons who are taken seriously by the Beltway elite are on the way out. The *New York Times* leads the way. Trying to play God for much too long has left the paper of record believed by only 21 percent of its readers according to Pew research.

All I can say is it was about time. Just to illustrate the arrogance of the liberal mindset which the media has fawned over since Uncle Joe Stalin’s day, they are now crying foul and demanding that the Federal Election Commission restore the Fairness Doctrine because conservatism is finally getting a fair hearing by the American people.

That arch-phony Robert Kennedy Jr. is almost as hysterical as Maureen Dowd because our voices are being

heard for a change. Kennedy’s rationale reminds me of that of Karagiozis, a Greek clown who tells his business partner, “All I have is mine, and all you have is mine also ...” Kennedy claims that conservatives rule the airwaves and the media. It’s as valid a claim as when he pleaded innocent to heroin possession while smacked out on his back during a commercial flight.

And speaking of Uncle Joe, while FDR was president there was a very significant infiltration of the government by Soviet agents. A vast propaganda campaign by journalists like I.F. Stone—an idol of that other arch-phony Christopher Hitchens—managed to discredit a great American like Sen. Joe McCarthy and turn him into a figure of ridicule and hate. As the recent *Time* magazine cover girl Ann Coulter said, McCarthy was not only a patriot, he was a man of total integrity and of high intelligence. Yet his name is mud because of Soviet agents like Stone and others of his ilk that libel laws do not permit me to name. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* praised Stone to the skies.

When JFK betrayed the brave Cubans at the Bay of Pigs, all he had to do was call in his buddy Ben Bradlee, and the latter did the rest. Alger Hiss, traitor and Soviet agent to his fingertips, got a free ride from what Paul Johnson calls the Seven Deadly Sinners: *Time*, *Newsweek*, CBS, NBC, ABC, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. For the deadly seven, it remains psychologically impossible to accept that America is ever anything but malevolent. The greatest mass murderer (as a ratio of population) of all time, Pol Pot, was offered excuses by the leftists in the media as the American press endlessly magnified American faults while ignoring enemy atrocities.

Now the chickens are starting to come home to roost. ■



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THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

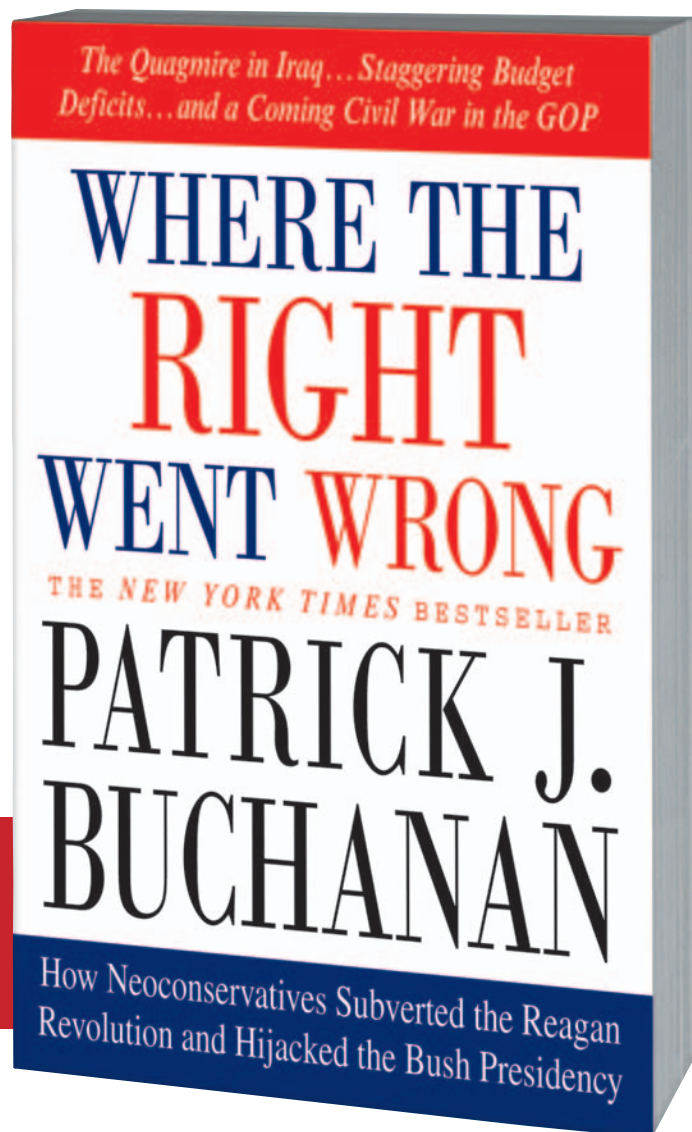
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